


TRUE AND ETERNAL



THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN YEAR
FROM THE PAGES OF 'THE TIMES'
1945-1946

PUBLISHED FOR
THE  **TIMES**
By HODDER AND STOUGHTON

First printed January 1947

PRINTED AND BOUND IN GREAT BRITAIN FOR HODDER AND STOUGHTON, LIMITED
BY RICHARD CLAY AND COMPANY, LTD., BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

INTRODUCTION



FEW features in modern journalism can have persisted as long as the Saturday sermons in *The Times*. Begun when the first world war was at its height, they continue firmly entrenched in the esteem and gratitude of a wide circle of readers thirty years later, when a second and more terrible world war has run its course.

During that time the pronouncements of secularist prophets have oscillated between radiant optimism and the recent despondent cry that "man is at the end of his tether." The steadiness of conviction which informs these Christian reflections on the meaning and outcome of human life and conduct is an impressive contrast.

The thoughtful and searching meditations of which this book is composed consistently focus thought on the eternal truths and Divine resources that have enabled men to live nobly and well in widely differing ages and in the most exacting circumstances. They do not distract attention

from today's crisis, but they carry the reader beyond and above it.

Few contemporary writings on religion can compare with these Saturday sermons for *wholeness* (or the power to make whole or healthful). Their quality is to collect our scattered thoughts, frayed emotions and divided wills round the one unchanging and unassailable fact of the Divine goodness and love.

Written as the present sermons were amidst the crash of empires and the onrush of momentous world events, it is inevitable that they should refer directly from time to time to contemporary events. The test indeed of the reality of religious faith is its power to confront such stupendous happenings undismayed, and it has therefore seemed best to leave these references unchanged.

References are sometimes made in the text to the Anglican collect or lesson for the ensuing Sunday. These can be easily traced from the Table of Contents, where the sermons are dated according to the Church calendar.

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I

GOD AND LIFE ETERNAL



GOD AND LIFE ETERNAL
The Beginning and the End.

DIVINE LOVE
A Transforming Power.

REDEMPTIVE PITY
Help and Healing

POWER AND LOVE
A Vital Union.

JOY IN HEAVEN
The Value of Each Life.

TRINITY SUNDAY
Adoration.

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THE BEGINNING AND THE END

TO look back, as far as the beginning, whatever the word "beginning" suggests; to look forward, as far as the end, whenever and in whatever way the end may be thought of as arriving, is, for Christian faith, to look to God. For he is the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and Omega. There are no wastelands in or out of time and space which have existed independently of him and will for ever continue outside his control. God alone is the Eternal One, and, therefore, he alone is almighty. Those great chapters of the Book of Isaiah, the forty-first to the forty-fifth, were written to inspire the Jews of Babylon, soon to return to their own country, with a sense of the grandeur of the faith in the one, eternal God and of the security to be found in his creation and over-ruling providence.

To God as the first and the last the thoughts of many Christian people will be drawn to-morrow by the lessons they will hear read in church.

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The God of that first creation which the author of Genesis describes in words of such restrained but moving simplicity is the God whose throne is in the heavenly city which John saw coming down out of heaven, the city perfect in beauty and goodness. The unity of the Bible is, before all else, the consistency of its witness from Genesis to Revelation to the one God from whom all good things come, and in whom they find their final home and consummation. The different human standpoints, the growing apprehensions within the Bible of all that God, as the living God, is and does, are but part of the same consistent witness. "The New Testament lies hid in the Old," said St. Augustine. His words might well be illustrated by the message of Septuagesima Sunday, as in its light God is worshipped as Creator and Final End.

Because in the Bible this faith in God is held with complete seriousness, and there is no employment of religious terms and titles without attention to their real significance, it carries with it, first implicitly, then explicitly, faith in eternal life as the end to which man can attain. The true humanism is this Biblical humanism, since the value of man and of human achievements cannot be rightly estimated apart from belief as to human destiny. The "other-worldliness" with which

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Christians are sometimes reproached is, fundamentally, the affirmation that man has a destiny in which death has a place, but not the last place.

Probably many of those who find fault with the Christian Church for its emphasis upon Creed and theology would exclude from their objection to "dogma" the beliefs in God and in human immortality; these would seem intrinsically reasonable, almost to be taken for granted. But that is not in the least the real state of things to-day. Belief in the beginning and the ending of the Creed does not gain in strength and influence conduct the more surely when the intervening clauses are ignored as unimportant. That God exists and that man survives death are truths which a man may hold independently of his attitude towards specifically Christian doctrine; but the evidence of the present religious situation in England does not point towards a firmer grasp of those truths as a result of their detachment from the rest of the Christian creed.

It may not be possible always to say exactly how belief in that which transcends the limits of this world affects thought and behaviour directed towards the things of this world. But man is a rational being, and it will certainly make a difference whether or no he believes that he stands in the presence of God, the Beginning and the

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End, and that the supreme hope which he need never lose is that of life eternal. Those who have that faith will do well to remember it thankfully on Septuagesima Sunday.

DIVINE LOVE



A TRANSFORMING POWER

IT is well worth while occasionally to examine the words and phrases which in course of time have become, as it were, commonplaces of the Christian vocabulary. Some will be found to have lost much of their full significance, and others to have acquired a sense remote from their original meaning. The phrase "God's love" seems in popular usage to have suffered a change of this kind. It is true that no part of our Lord's teaching is prized more highly than his revelation that the divine love is not merely bestowed on mankind as a whole, or on some special "chosen people" or elect few, but is an individual and personal love of every man or woman who tries, however imperfectly, to claim it by obedience to the divine will. Obviously, this is a truth of high value. Yet it does not answer a question of first-rate importance which lies behind it. When in these days the average Christian speaks of "God's love," what precisely does he mean?

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Does his interpretation really accord with that which the New Testament supplies?

By many people the love of God is thought of as little more than a supernatural influence, widely diffused and benignant, intended to bring comfort and peace of mind to the disciple, protesting his soul and body against unseen dangers. Such a sentimentalized idea has been encouraged by a certain type of preaching and by some favourite hymns. Although it contains elements of truth, it is as a whole lamentably defective and misleading. Often it leads to deep disappointment because the tranquillity of mind which God's love is said to grant is not attained. Yet if our Lord's teaching in the Gospels, and the interpretation of it in the Epistles, are studied carefully, this widely prevalent idea of what God's love means and does will be found erroneous. So far from being a gentle influence, the direction of divine love towards man's soul is the releasing of a tremendous force. So far from being designed to bring him a feeling of security and comfort, its first effect should be to make him restless and dissatisfied. For the intense energy of God's love is set in motion with a single definite aim, which is to transform character. Love is so to change man that he becomes in the vivid Pauline phrase, "a new creature." His whole

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outlook, his entire set of values, must be altered, until he is brought into intimate relationship with God. And the first stage of this process is to fill him not with peace but with discontent, as he realizes the gulf between what he is and what he ought to be. Only when the divine love has done its work of transformation will the peace of God possess the heart and mind. But the primary aim and purpose of God's love is not to make him comfortable; it is to make him good; to change him by the compelling grip of its force until his mind, so far as human infirmity allows, is in tune with the mind of God.

As the New Testament shows, Christianity effects a radical alteration which God's love exists to accomplish. Perhaps the trouble of many who sincerely suppose themselves to be Christians is that they rest content with a form of religion which is really no more than an easy-going substitute for the Christianity of the Gospels, and ignores the exacting demands of God's love. That it proves a disappointment and brings no enduring peace of mind is no matter for surprise. In religion, as in every other department of life, the inexorable law holds good that only in proportion as a man sows can he hope to reap.

REDEMPITIVE PITY



HELP AND HEALING

TO-MORROW'S Gospel contains two signal instances of Christ's exercise of his willingness and power to help the needy and the helpless. It is such records as these of the cleansing of a leper and the healing of a centurion's servant which have made Christlikeness synonymous with mercy, pity, and love. But they are significant of more than this: while they are a perfect expression of human compassion at its deepest and tenderest, they are also manifestations of divine power. This union of pity and power illustrates one of the vital differences between Christianity and rationalist humanism, the difference between faith in the effective intervention of the power and love of God in history and human attempts to make the poor best which is all that can be made of a godless and meaningless world.

Thus the Gospel's epiphany of divine love and power ("if thou wilt, thou canst") is closely linked with the prayer of the collect that God,

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the almighty and everlasting, will "mercifully look upon our infirmities" and "stretch forth (his) right hand to help," as Christ made his response of power to the leper's cry for cleansing and "put forth his hand" and healed him. The point which the Christian finds himself stressing to-day, as he is faced with man's inability to save and deliver himself from the consequences of his incorrigible tendency to ignore God and assert his own self-sufficiency, is the contrast between pity which sympathizes with suffering but possesses no power to relieve it, and the victorious entrance of God into human life in the Incarnation. A comparison has often been made between the Greek idea of the purifying effect of pity aroused by the spectacle of tragedy and the Christian Gospel of the redemptive pity of God. The first effects nothing more than a possible increase of sympathy and understanding; the second is the fountain of grace and mercy which was opened at Bethlehem and Calvary and brings liberation and new life to mankind.

This combination of the will and the power to help is the crown of Christ's revelation of God. The question whether God the Creator has the will to help his creation is answered in Christ's teaching about God as Father and men as his children. "If ye then being evil know how to

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give good things unto your children how much more shall your Father which is in Heaven give good things to them that ask him" The next step in the progress of faith is the "if thou wilt, thou canst" of the leper's appeal. Has God the power to "stretch forth his right hand to help"? Has God hands of help and healing? Heine, the poet, stricken in Paris with a fatal disease, dragged himself one day into the Louvre to bid farewell to the lovely creations of art upon which he had long feasted his soul. Chief among these was the statue of the Venus of Milo, beautiful though mutilated, for it has lost both its arms. "As I entered the hall," he wrote, "where the most blessed goddess of beauty, our dear lady of Melos, stands on her pedestal, I all but broke down, and fell at her feet sobbing piteously, so that even a heart of stone must be softened. And the goddess gazed at me compassionately, yet withal so comfortless, as one who should say, seest thou not that I have no arms and cannot help thee."

"Compassionately, yet withal so comfortless," would be man's inevitable conclusion about the inactivity of God, if, having the will, he had not the power to help when all that man could achieve unaided has broken down in failure and disaster. Christianity's message in this crisis of history

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is that in Christ is revealed both the will and the power of God to deliver him from the dangers that beset him, and to set his feet moving with the certain promise of ultimate arrival in the way of peace. That power is available in every human situation as it arises, but always on the condition of faith, which, like the leper's and the centurion's, kneels and worships and humbly commits itself for the fulfilment of his purposes into the outstretched hands of God.

POWER AND LOVE



A VITAL UNION

IN one of his recorded conversations Robert Browning affirmed that the union of power and love is the greatest problem of life; and in his *Reverie*, published on the day he died, he avowed his faith that, here or hereafter, that union will be accomplished.

“ I have faith such end shall be ;
From the first, Power was—I knew ;
Life has made clear to me
That strive but the closer view,
Love were as plain to see.”

Probably there have never been so many minds engaged in thinking out this problem, and so painfully conscious of the transcendent issues involved in success or failure in finding a practical solution, as there are now. The first atomic bomb destroyed more than an enemy city: it destroyed also the complacent illusions of those who, repudiating religion, have claimed that science

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is a panacea for all man's diseases and guarantees the arrival of an earthly paradise. This loudly proclaimed confidence was profoundly shaken during the war, and it received its death-blow at Hiroshima.

The problem arises because of the evil in man, self-centred in his misuse of power. If men were wholly good their possession of power would be the source of immense benefits and progress in mastery over the means of life. But in evil hands power becomes a portentous menace. No political system of defence against lethal war-weapons can permanently secure immunity from their use by those who are indifferent to the fatal consequences. The threat of unmoralized material force can be met and mastered only by spiritual power. So far from being irrelevant to the present situation, religion alone holds the key to deliverance from the prospect of human self-destruction. Christ's way of liberation is the way of the bowed knees and the uplifted hands of the Lord's Prayer, "Thine is the power." Man alienated from God inevitably reverts to animalism and becomes, in German phrasing, "a beast of prey," who looks upon those who attempt to order life upon the basis of justice, mercy, and compassion as "beasts of prey with their teeth broken." Man was so created

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that he violates the vital laws of his being when he attempts to settle down in self-dependent estrangement from God. His choice in his modern crisis lies between the thorough-going change of mind and heart which the New Testament describes as reconciliation with God and self-doom to annihilation.

Christianity is the direct negation of the widely held dogma that the supremacy of non-moral force is the dominant fact in the universe and human life. Against this it sets the Kingdom, the rule and realm, of God, who is love, in the full Christian sense of love, self-giving in service and sacrifice. Christ's rule of life is love of God first, the love of him who is love, which must needs express itself in love of man. "To some extent," said William Temple, "the two great commandments have been allowed to fall apart in men's minds. Religion . . . has come to be regarded as 'a private affair between a man and his Maker,' whereas love of neighbour has been treated as the substantial duty of man, and as possible of fulfilment apart from love towards God." When this generation ceases to regard itself as self-sufficing, and aroused by a clear vision of whither it is drifting begins seriously and humbly to ask the age-long questions about God and man and the meaning of life and human destiny, it will

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discover, as those first Christians did who "turned the world upside-down," that the world is right side up only when it sets its face towards God. Else "chaos is come again," and the world is "without form and void."

The perfect union of power and love has been once achieved in Christ the conqueror of sin and death. To the Christian, therefore, there is always light on the horizon; the final end is assured: Christ "must reign till all his enemies are under his feet." Meanwhile man has to choose between power without love, which is death and darkness, and love which makes power the instrument of good for human well-being and the service of God.

JOY IN HEAVEN



THE VALUE OF EACH SINGLE LIFE

IN this world the powers that be inevitably think in terms of the great multitudes of people who come within the range of their various activities, and can discriminate but little between individuals. The more assuredly, therefore, do our Lord's words concerning his Father's care for each single person come as a message of comfort and good cheer. If there is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, that is because he who made both angels and men is glad when the lost sheep is brought back to the fold and the lost coin is found. God is not as man, and in any ascription to God of the feelings characteristic of humanity there must be no suggestion that God is made in the image of man. Yet no Christian can think that F. W. Faber exaggerated or distorted the truth when he wrote in one of his hymns the words,

For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind;
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind.

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In its strong hold upon this distinctive, individualizing love of God, the Christian Gospel challenges the pessimism which is a constant threat to those who fix their eyes on humanity and view it as a whole. For humanity can convey the impression of a material so intractable that the problem of its satisfactory organization may well appear to be beyond the wit of the wisest. And the problem is all the more difficult, since humanity is not a lifeless thing, but a vast society of living men and women who have ideas and desires of their own. These cannot all be satisfied in their simplicity: that must be fully recognized. There are limitations inherent in the fact that individuals live in societies; the good of the society rightly takes precedence over the good of any individual. But unless a man feels that he counts, that he is neither a pawn nor a cipher, that his life has in and for itself a real value, he will have lost something for which there is no compensation. In the history of mankind there has been no easy passage to the belief that the particular life matters. The outward magnificence of some of the ancient societies was brought at the great, the far too great, price of indifference to the individual. It is a price too well known through the experiences of modern days.

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But he who holds fast the teaching of Christ is secured against every kind of depreciation of the individual man. Not simply as the foundation, but in the foreground, of our Lord's words is his uplifting of human life above all that is relative to it in view of its exposure to the ebb and flow, the changes and chances of this world, on to that level where the light shines upon the unchanging truth of the worth that it has in the sight of God. The sinner who repents and turns to God for forgiveness is always a prodigal son returning to his true home. Indeed, it would not be going too far to say that the dignity, the final, assured value of each single person is given once and for all in this fact, that he is able to receive from God the forgiveness of his sins.

Most people are very ordinary people and do not expect that their names will be written in the records of history. To few of them will that be a discouragement, but to all these may come, perhaps in some moment of special grief or strain, the doubt whether what they are and do is of any real account when viewed in relation to the great earthly context in which they have their place. But Christ's Gospel would teach them that their names may be written in heaven and had in perpetual remembrance in the presence of God.

TRINITY SUNDAY



ADORATION

MORE clearly than any other Sunday in the year, Trinity Sunday sounds the call to adoration, a call the more to be welcomed because adoration is a form of devotion given too little place in the life of the average Englishman. If, in the common phrase, he "says his prayers," this usually means that he asks God for the fulfilment of his personal needs and desires, and that he remembers in his intercessions those whom he loves. He is, of course, perfectly right in doing this; in fact, he is complying with our Lord's teaching about prayer. In periods of stress, too, he prays for his nation, and at times, if too seldom, he offers thanksgiving for blessing already given. Yet he should wish to rise at least occasionally to a higher level of devotion, for merely to offer a series of petitions to God is not, in the true meaning of the word, to worship. Indeed, in this sense many of our churches, if homes of intercession and thanks-

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giving, are far too seldom "places of worship." The difference may be stated briefly by saying that prayer, in a greater or less degree, is self-centred or world-centred; worship, which is pure adoration, is always and wholly God-centred. In adoration the soul ceases to think of itself and of this world; it contemplates, with utter humility and awe, the perfection and majesty of God.

The Bible shows to what heights of adoration the human mind can reach; the Psalms abound with examples; there is noble adoration in the writings of St. Paul:—

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! . . . For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever.

Such words show the spirit of pure worship; again, the last book of the Bible describes with magnificent imagery the worship of the redeemed in heaven. All thought of self is banished from their anthems; their sole theme is the greatness of God.

Trinity Sunday invites a like self-forgetfulness, and summons the Christian to bow in adoration. It does not profess to explain the nature of God's being, and its doctrine of the Trinity is no more

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than an attempt to set forth briefly certain limited truths about the Divine being which have been derived from Christian experience. Yet when theology has said its last word, the mystery of God remains; clouds and darkness are still round about him, although righteousness and judgment are known to be the habitation of his seat. The effect of this mystery should be to reinforce rather than to weaken faith, for reasonable faith demands a God to worship who infinitely transcends the grasp of human intellect. But what is revealed is sufficient to justify adoration of what remains hidden; all that man can know of God, combined with what during the human stage of life must be unknown, compels wonder and worship, and encourages response to the call "O come let us worship, and fall down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker."

The pass at times from prayer and thanksgiving to selfless adoration is both to offer God his due and to gain new strength for the soul. It is a welcome and wholesome change to pass clear above the region of human affairs and difficulties, to raise every thought heavenwards, to think for a while of God and of him alone. "Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name!'

II

THE CHURCH AND HOLY SCRIPTURE



UNITY THROUGH FAITH
The Temple and the Body.

CHRISTIAN UNITY
The Approach by Action.

NEW AND OLD
Wide Sympathies.

HARVEST
The Need for Labourers

HOLY SCRIPTURE
The Key of Knowledge.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL
The Person of Jesus.

UNITY 'THROUGH FAITH



THE TEMPLE AND THE BODY

TWO of the noblest Anglican collects close the series of those appointed for saints' days. To-morrow is St. Simon's and St. Jude's Day, and this leads on next Thursday to the festival of All Saints, with which it is as closely linked in thought as by its place in the calendar. These collects are inspired by the same idea of unity expressed in the two classic Christian symbols of the temple and the body.

In the first the petition is that the church may "so be joined together in unity of spirit" by the doctrine of apostles and prophets that "it may be made an holy temple." The second prays that the church may so follow God's blessed saints, "knit together . . . in the mystical body of . . . Christ our Lord," that it may "come to those unspeakable joys" which God has "prepared for them that unfeignedly love" him.

Here, in a world distraught by years of desper-

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ate conflict and suffering, is disclosed the secret of the recovery of human unity. Here is unity born of truth and faith, unity of life and spirit, character and action, which alone can look for fulfilment of itself in a sublime destiny. For there is no road to the enduring unity of nations other than the way of him who proclaimed himself to be "the Way" because he is "the Truth and the Life." Mankind has just emerged from a life-and-death struggle with an appalling power created by false doctrines, fanatically taught and practised, which was set to make havoc of civilization. An evil philosophy usurped the place of Christianity and welded an entire people into a deadly unity of belief and purpose, which menaced the whole structure of freedom and aimed at turning back in perpetuity the stream of human progress. It was destroyed by a union of peoples bound together by a faith as definite and more powerful than that which threatened them.

Confronted with a chaos of national rivalries and animosities, no religion can avail to unite mankind which is not founded upon truths as positive as the teachings which oppose it. The strange delusion of an undogmatic Christianity has robbed multitudes of the saving ministry of the Gospel, and reduced the Christian revelation to the level of a natural philosophy in which

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man struggles in vain to discover God and the meaning of life. The Christian church owes its existence to a doctrine of God and man which is an interpretation of historic facts: upon that foundation it has been built up into a temple where men "worship the Father . . . in spirit and in truth." In the view of many the church is merely a humanitarian society whose sole purpose is to secure for all men the maximum of material well-being, in default of any real contact with the mysterious world spiritual and invisible. In the Christian view, on the contrary, the church is the body of Christ in which men are united in spiritual community and share his life. Behind the sectional attachments within the universal church are the great truths which all Christians hold in common, truths which are, and always have been, the motive-power of the life and witness of God's saints.

Thus the temple and the body derive their unity from the possession of that common faith, whose fruit is "virtuous and godly living," which awaits its perfect fulfilment in the world eternal. With one consent All Saints bear witness to their personal allegiance to Christ and their spiritual experience of him. This it is which makes them "an habitation of God through the Spirit" and their lives the offering of a sacrificial

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worship. They are "all one in Christ Jesus," no man-created institution organized by earth-bound human energies, but a living body dedicated to the service of him who fills it with the power of his risen life.

When this faith and life of the church penetrate and permeate the life of the nations "the kingdoms of this world " will "become the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." This is man's eternal goal, and the only way to it is the way of the faith of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

CHRISTIAN UNITY



THE APPROACH BY ACTION

EVERY thoughtful Christian will concern himself in these days with the problem of increasing Christian unity. Clearly the need of increased unity has never been so great; clearly also little progress towards gaining it can be made until Christians generally take an active part in the endeavour, instead of merely sympathizing with the efforts of a few leaders and enthusiasts. Perhaps the inquirer may well begin by asking why the past efforts for such unity have had, at most, a very limited and transient success. He will find them to have been based on an ideal of a universal agreement among Christians, when all shall interpret identically the historic facts summarized in their creed. But to-day the fallacy underlying that idea begins to be more widely perceived.

That agreement should be reached among all Christian men and women by this road is neither possible nor indeed desirable. The Cre-

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ator has made them almost infinitely various, with different powers of perceiving truth, which, in its entirety, is far too great to be grasped in this stage of life by any one individual or any one religious society. A creed is a summary of experience, but it cannot have the same meaning for all unless they suppress personality and inhibit their thinking powers. Numerous attempts have been made to frame some formula which those who have differed will all be able to accept. Sometimes this seems to have been achieved, yet soon the adopted formula proves, after all, to have different meanings for different people, and disputes begin afresh as to which is right. Probably enough there is complete agreement over the historic facts which the creed embodies; it is over the interpretation and implications of those facts that argument persists.

If, then, there seems little chance of arriving at religious unity by this road, is there an alternative? Though the suggestion is merely tentative, the approach by way of action instead of by creed may be worth trying. It seems that along this way rather than the other, by deed instead of by conference, the most hopeful progress towards Christian unity has been made in recent years. In the mission-field, for example, clergy and ministers of different schools of thought and denom-

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inations have been driven by force of circumstance to cooperate, and, ignoring theological diversities, have found themselves happily united in the end. A similar experience befell many chaplains during the war. Instead of postponing united worship and action until intellectual agreement had been reached, they joined in common action first, to find that a larger measure of agreement than ever they had known previously was the sequel.

Long ago this suggestion seems to have had the support of that very orthodox Anglican, Scott Holland. An essay of his praises the author of "John Inglesant" because he saw "how far wider were the possibilities of reconciliation that lay in taking action as the symbol of union rather than a creed. An act allows for every variety of interpretation and approach, and yet is itself positive and concrete. Thus it is that a sacrament may bind together into vital cohesion those who can hardly find any other way of expressing their unity of belief. And the Church's bond of union is, after all, a sacrament, of which the creed is but the authorized interpretation." It seems, then, at least worth while to consider whether this approach by way of action may not prove to be that road to unity which in these days every Christian should be eager to find.

NEW AND OLD



WIDE SYMPATHIES

THE characteristic of our Lord's teaching which first caught the attention of those who heard it was its novelty. "A new teaching!" they exclaimed. But when they heard more they must have been impressed by the degree in which it combined much that was old with much that was strikingly novel. As our Lord said, it was not his aim to weaken the authority of the law or the prophets; he made full use of both, and quoted the Old Testament to support his doctrine. He took words frequent in every scribe's vocabulary—"righteousness," "faith," "love"—and gave them new richness of meaning. The imagery of his parables was of a homely and familiar kind. He drew unexpected lessons from the most ordinary of natural events—the sunset, the sowing and ripening of a harvest-field. And he encouraged the disciples to follow this example when they in turn preached his Gospel. "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of

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heaven," he said; every Christian teacher should be "like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."

This saying has a special value at the present time because in an age of swift transition it is all too easy to fail in one respect or the other and to disparage everything old or everything new. There are those who insist that the Church can succeed only if it puts aside every inherited tradition, doctrine which it has accepted as fundamental for 18 centuries, and even moral standards which it has upheld for the same length of time. At the opposite extreme are those who hate novelty and fiercely oppose change. But to make progress the Church must both profit by tradition and experience and also use new methods to meet new needs, bringing forth for service from its treasury things new and old.

The same wide range of sympathy is necessary for the individual and to gain it often needs resolute effort. Not easily will those who detest innovation bring themselves to admit that it has become necessary; not easily will those who scorn the past allow that upon its foundation each new development should be based. Yet such intolerance is a sign of defective sympathy. Those who revere the past must set themselves

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not merely to understand, but to welcome, all that is good in modern ideas. Those who imagine that tradition has no value, that wisdom began with this century, must open their minds to learn how vast is their debt to those who gained what they now take as a matter of course, and how valuable is the guidance of accumulated experience. It is, after all, no new religion that the world needs, but an extension, and in certain respects a fresh interpretation, of the old. There can be no excuse for rejecting indiscriminately every doctrine and form of devotion that have come down from the past, for regarding the Sermon on the Mount as obsolete, or for turning Christian freedom into an excuse for moral laxity.

In the fullest degree, then, the precept given by our Lord retains its force. Like the Church, each individual needs to-day to treasure and to use things both new and old. For the Lord, himself changeless, does not fail to serve each succeeding generation of disciples according to its special need, and in him mankind can still find love as old as that shown on Calvary, and power as new as the problems which tomorrow's events may bring.

HARVEST



THE NEED FOR LABOURERS

MANY a farmer during the years of war must have looked at his ripening grain, the fruit of months of toil, with a feeling almost akin to despair. Where would he find the essential labour for its ingathering? It would seem that with some such feeling as this our Lord looked out upon the world of men; for that harvest, too, depended upon the human agent. When he said "The harvest truly is great" he doubtless meant that many were ready to respond to the claims of his Kingdom could the challenge but be put before them.

But the value of any harvest is merely potential; to make it actual much and varied labour is needed. What was true in the days of our Lord's ministry is manifestly true to-day. It would be an exaggeration to say that multitudes are consciously seeking for that which Christianity claims to provide, but it is an obvious fact that in all the welter and chaos of the modern situation many

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are deeply desiring a world in which spiritual values are the touchstone of international policy as well as of individual behaviour. But more is needed than the search and the aspiration. Even good will, necessary as it is, can be no guarantee of wisdom, nor of the right direction of human effort.

It is therefore the task of the Church—which implies the responsibility of its individual members—to be the channel of that guidance and inspiration which are ultimately the gift of God's Spirit. "The labourers are few." As the Christian Church faces the modern world with its intractable problems, and the new dangers to which the great achievements of science have given birth, it may well seem that its task is beyond all human capacity. And so it is. But there is a point at which the best of human effort may tap the divine energy, which then vitalizes and reinforces the highest that man can accomplish. It is the purpose of the Christian Gospel, at least in part, to make this link between man and God and so to set free the regenerating forces which the world needs for its salvation.

The reaping of the harvest will involve effort in what is called "evangelism," though evangelism must be thought of as more than the declaration of a message. The spreading of God's Kingdom makes a much deeper demand than the conscious

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effort of the Christian to influence others, even for their good. It will not be enough to proclaim God's love and righteousness; the meaning of these divine attributes must be interpreted in and through the lives of Christian people. The appeal to fear, to enlightened self-interest, or even to the widespread desire for a better order, may, and probably will, elicit its own appropriate response, but that response will not always bear upon it the clear insignia of God's Kingdom. Love is the law of that kingdom—love interpreting itself in the whole range of human activity; working as leaven, gradually and almost imperceptibly permeating life in ever-widening areas of thought and conduct.

Doubtless the Church's corporate work for the world should be as varied as human life is varied, but if it is to succeed its work must be characterized by that special quality of heart and mind which the New Testament calls love. The labourers in this harvest are they who seek to express the spirit of God's Kingdom in every situation in which they live and move; and this, not simply because they are men of good will, nor only because they desire a better world order, but because they are the disciples of him who came into the world that "the world through him might be saved."

HOLY SCRIPTURE



THE KEY OF KNOWLEDGE

TO many who came to it with little knowledge of its background the Bible may at first seem remote and somewhat irrelevant. It is rather like reading a guide book describing a country which the reader has never seen. Once the country has been visited the book comes alive. The purpose of the Bible is not to teach as a book of geography or of history teaches, nor even as a handbook of theology teaches, but to make God a reality and to bring the soul into fellowship with him; and this in spite of the fact that in its story of man's early groping towards the light, inadequate and even misleading views of God are sometimes reflected. It has been said that "the knowledge of God is the key to all knowledge." In a deeply true sense such a claim is no exaggeration.

To-morrow's collect speaks of the Scriptures as "written for our learning." The reader who studies them with attention and a teachable spirit will have taken the path to that knowledge which

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is essential to a full and fruitful life. In the stories of the Old Testament he will see as in a mirror his own struggles and failures and aspirations; he will discover how men have found strength in their weakness, consolation in adversity, and restoration after failure. In the teaching and life of our Lord in the Gospels he will be brought into the very heart of divine self-revelation; and in the other books of the New Testament he will find both the story of the Church's beginnings and the inspired interpretation of Christian truth, as well as much practical guidance for the conduct of life. He will receive answers to his questions about truth and about God, and he will learn that his search for God is itself his response to the divine initiative.

In its essence human nature shows little change. The human problem to-day is much what it was in the days during which, through many centuries, the Bible was being written. It is primarily through man's experience that God reveals himself. The Bible is the book of man, as it is the book of God; it is a revelation of man, as it is a revelation of God. In it man sees the mirror held up to Nature, but he also sees, albeit "through a glass, darkly," what God is like. As men have read this book they have heard God speaking to them through the words and experi-

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ences of people like themselves. So it has been for them the channel of the word of God.

Christians have always spoken of the Bible as an inspired book. It is not easy to define its inspiration, but it can be recognized by those who submit themselves to its influence, who meditate upon it, who "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" it. To him who comes to it with spiritual awareness and receptivity the Bible is a pearl without price. Its inspiration is verified in his own experience; it affords him strength and guidance; it leads him into the presence of God; and he may make his own the words of the Psalmist: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL



THE PERSON OF JESUS

BORROWING a phrase of Bunyan, one might truly say that the fourth Gospel is the house of the Interpreter, and that to study it means the growth of acquaintance with its rooms and treasures. There is, indeed, no lack of interpretation in the other Gospels, but its presence is not equally due to the deliberate intention of the writers; it is the interpretation of the life and work of the Lord Jesus which sustained the very existence of the Christian Society and was presupposed by the evangelists in every sentence which they wrote. With St. John it is different; the background of the other three becomes the foreground of his. In the earlier Gospels the deepest truth lies most often in the shadows; he shows it with the light full upon it.

On the meaning of the Person of Jesus his is the final word of the New Testament. It is a word already to be heard in the writings of St.

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Paul and in the Epistle to the Hebrews; but it is not brought into close and continual relation with the earthly life of Jesus. For that to be possible a Gospel must needs be written, and to do that neither St. Paul nor the unknown author of Hebrews felt himself called. The few passages about our Lord's life in that author's letter may cause regret that he did not go further and write a book to expound in its historical setting the mystery of the Son of God partaking of that flesh and blood in which he was made in all things like to his brethren. What he did not do became the vocation of another, whose gift is the fourth Gospel.

As he looked back upon the Lord's life, the fourth evangelist was conscious of a significance in the words and the works which he wished to make plain to his readers. Jesus had done wonderful things which had caused amazement to his disciples and to hostile witnesses. They were no inventions of a later age; they had their place in the earliest tradition. Some of them appear in the fourth Gospel, but this evangelist did not simply reproduce what stood in the pages of his predecessors. But alike for what was old and what was new he had one word of interpretation; it is the word "sign." First of what happened at the marriage feast in Cana he wrote, "this

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beginning of signs (quite literally 'of the signs') did Jesus . . . and manifested his glory: and his disciples believed on him." It is all summed up in that verse of the Prologue, where comes the first reference to the glory, the word which recalls the Shekinah of the Old Testament, the radiant manifestation of God's presence with his people. To the Word made flesh the witness is borne. "We beheld his glory as of the only-begotten from the Father."

In the Epiphany season Christian thought is directed towards the wonder of the Person of Jesus. Others besides believers in him as the Christ, the Son of God, may be conscious of that wonder. Indeed, it is hardly possible to escape from it except by the truly desperate expedient of cutting out of the Gospels whatever goes beyond ordinary experience, the result being a vast void of which nothing can be made, since there are no resources available for filling it up. What St. John does is to show whither the sense of wonder, awakened by actions of Jesus, was already pointing in the days of the earthly ministry. His works of power and compassion radiated a glory which was the glory of his Person. What he did was the reflection of what he was.

That which is revealed in Christianity is, first of all at least, not a system of truths but a Person.

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Wherever the Gospel is preached men are brought face to face with Jesus Christ. He is, in himself, the question that calls for an answer. In the fourth Gospel the evangelist, the interpreter, shows the answer as already present in the signs which he records, but also in the whole of the life, the "eternal life," as he writes elsewhere, "which was with the Father and was manifested to us."

III

THE MAJOR SEASONS OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR



Advent

JUDGMENT DAYS
The Supreme Standard.

CHRISTMAS
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Lent.

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The Danger of Drift

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HOLY WEEK
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Easter.

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THE EMPTY TOMB
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THE ASCENSION

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WHITSUNTIDE

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JUDGMENT DAYS



THE SUPREME STANDARD

TO-MORROW is Advent Sunday and the beginning of an ecclesiastical year. At first sight it may seem strange that Advent, with its thoughts of the Last Judgment and the end of this world, should have been given the first instead of the last place in the cycle of Christian seasons. After the anniversaries of our Lord's Birth, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension, it might seem natural to end the sequence with those weeks which contemplate his Second Coming. Probably two considerations influenced those who shaped the present scheme, which seems to date from the fifth century. One was a wish that, as Lent precedes Easter, so another period of solemn devotion and penitence should precede Christmas. The other was a feeling that to make Advent the immediate prelude to Christmas would link together, though in a reversed order, thoughts of our Lord's First and Second Coming.

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But to the modern mind a quite different reason may justify the choice of Advent as the beginning of the Church's year. Even devout people to-day are not greatly influenced by those pictures of a cataclysmic Last Judgment which in the Middle Ages stirred both terror and delight. Much of the imagery with which it is described in the New Testament is now known to have been taken over from apocalyptic literature, which its eastern readers never interpreted with our western literalism. Yet the Advent thought of Judgment Day gains rather than loses in importance when it becomes the thought of continuous Judgment Days, when the judgment is regarded not merely as a single "far-off, divine event" but as a present and unbroken process. St. John in his vision "saw the dead, great and small, standing before God"; but it is the living also who, in a most true sense, stand before God for judgment day by day. Every nation and each individual is subject to that all-seeing scrutiny, is being justified or condemned by that supreme standard. And if there are times which in an exceptionally clear degree are days of judgment, when the choice between accepting the divine or some lower standard becomes most evident, then beyond question the period in which we now live is such a time. Of special value

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therefore is Advent, with its insistence on God's judgment, at the beginning of this Christian year.

Every thoughtful person may well feel himself challenged by Advent to a revaluation of his own life and character, to consider how these appear when he "stands before God," instead of being satisfied with the approval of some lower tribunal. Always there is a temptation to rest content with applying some easier test and with the adoption of some lower standard. It may be that of contemporary public opinion, or that of conventional ethics, or that of material success. It is all too easy to "stand before" some such arbiter, and to receive its approval with complacency. Yet the Christian knows that he stands before God for judgment—does so daily in this stage of life, as he will finally when this stage is exchanged for the next. This is the tremendous fact which matters, and not the setting of trumpeting angels and a dissolving universe with which apocalyptic literature accompanies the fact. To each man or woman, as to each community, the living Christ returns for judgment throughout time, as he will beyond it, appraising each by the effort made to comply with his supreme standard. Therefore Advent, in the light of this thought, can lend new intensity to the ancient *Te Deum*

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prayer: "We believe that thou shalt come to be our judge. We therefore pray thee, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood."

CHRISTMAS



THE WAY TO PEACE

WHEREVER the name of Christ is loved and revered the yearly return of Christmas draws men back to Bethlehem, and worship of the Word made flesh surrounds the manger-cradle. On the fourth Sunday in Advent those who follow the teaching of the Church throughout the season hear the herald voice of the Epistle: "The Lord is at hand," and a call to rejoice in the Incarnate Saviour. The Gospel is the Forerunner's declaration of the great arrival, "There standeth one among you whom you know not"; and the collect prays for his present coming in power to succour and deliver. The thoughts of the Sunday are already Christmas thoughts which echo the Aramaic prayer of the first Christians, *Marana Tha*, "Our Lord, come!"

Peace at this first Christmas after the war is still in the making. Those who look back will feel a contrast with the Christmas of 27 years ago, when there was general hope and expectation

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that the completion of the peace treaty would signalize the final end of war. True to itself, the festival does bring now a nearer approach to normal conditions: family circles include many who last year were oversea, the sirens are silent, and wintry darkness without is not deepened by the blackout's absence of light from within. "So hallowed and so gracious is the time," it provides at least a temporary relief from anxieties for all whose hearts are warmed by its home-comings and reunions and share the gaiety and enjoyment of children, to whom its festive revels are the brightest memories of the year.

These things are as vital a part of Christmas as flowers and blossoms are of each new spring. But they are fruits not the roots of the festival. In themselves apart from that which bore them, they are like Christmas trees, branches of yew or fir, which, severed from their parent trunks to serve a purpose, afterwards wither and die. The cynic looks upon Christmas peace and goodwill as fugitive sentiments quickened into transient life by custom and tradition; but in fact they are an upgrowth from revealed truth about man and about God. The Christmas story is as surely part and parcel of man's history on this earth as are such dark and dreadful facts as Belsen and Hiroshima, and its promise is a direct negation

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of the final triumph of evil in the threatened destruction, or at least obscurity, of civilization, "through a night of long centuries," by scientific war. Christmas is the festival of fellowship, not primarily because it is a fine flowering of humane kindness and natural enjoyment, but because it is the word of the eternal Father to his children, as they discover on their knees before the manger a bond of unity created by their common debt to Jesus the world's Saviour, who through his birth and death and resurrection has redeemed them and made them one in the family circle of God.

A right valuation of Christmas can be made only in the spirit of humility revealed in the divine self-emptying of its lowly birth. "How far is it to Bethlehem?" asks the modern carol. Too far for those who, to use Matthew Arnold's phrase, "glance, and nod, and bustle by," or, like Tolstoy wistfully exclaiming at a Nativity tableau, "If one could believe it!" have decided that it is incredible and have lost their way. Scientists agree that science opens its door into truth for those only who will enter it as a little child. How true this is also of those who are troubled and perplexed by the human prospect, as contemporary pessimism sees it, and eagerly desire a message of redemption, is evident to all

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who have seen the vision of God in the Virgin-born. "Glory to God in the highest" is the inescapable condition of "peace on earth among men of good will," and it is Christianity's first declaration of its primary truth, the priority of God. Where God is not enthroned among the peoples there can be no enduring peace. The way to peace for the world, to-day as always, is the rediscovery of God: all others lead to the abyss.

A MODERN LENT



THE DANGER OF DRIFT

NEXT Wednesday brings the return of Lent, the season set apart by long tradition for "fasting and repentance." In present circumstances austerity in the matter of food is enforced by authority other than ecclesiastical, and the most sensitive conscience need not trouble itself further over this Lenten duty. But the duty of repentance, when that word is interpreted rightly, remains as important as ever, and can be fulfilled only by individual effort. The word has in some ways a significance changed from that which it had for our forefathers. With them Lenten repentance meant joining in public professions of contrition, attendance at special services, and the use of melancholy but sentimental hymns. No doubt such Lenten observance brought some profit to those who used it, but for various reasons it makes little appeal to the average man or woman of to-day.

For them the essential part of "keeping

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Lent," the preliminary to the "repentance" which Lent demands, should be a thorough and candid self-examination, a study of his soul and of its present relation with God. As a rule the thoughtful person, though showing a Martha-like carefulness over many things, is apt to take his spiritual health for granted. He assumes it to be, more or less what it has been for many years, showing little sign either of new strength or new weakness. Up to a point, his attitude is wise enough. Nothing can be more mistaken than the habit of the spiritual valetudinarian, fussing perpetually over the state of his soul. Yet an occasional scrutiny of it is a precaution not to be neglected, and for this Lent seems to provide the opportunity. At times there will be some obvious progress or lapse to register. More often, however, when the average man tries honestly to see how he stands in relation with his religion, he will be inclined to reply that there has been no perceptible change. His beliefs, his standards of conduct, his habits seem to remain what they have been for many years past.

But before accepting this as his final judgment he will be wise to scrutinize himself more closely. Can he declare confidently that he is unaffected by the spiritual malady which is specially charac-

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teristic of this time, which is not anything like a formal renunciation of Christianity, but a gradual drift away from it? In its early stages the change is almost imperceptible, but it gains ground and soon does lamentable harm to the life of the soul. It means that the old earnestness about religion becomes tepid, that its obligations are thrust more and more into the background, that standards are relaxed, that God and the things of God are increasingly crowded out by other preoccupations. No one need blame himself too severely if his self-examination reveals symptoms of this tendency to drift. To a considerable extent it is due to the circumstances of this period, to the reaction after war, to mental and physical weariness, to the insistent claims upon thought and time.

Yet when the scrutiny of the soul which Lent suggests has disclosed signs of this gradual deterioration, this "hardening of the heart," as the Bible terms it, this drift away from God, the Christian will feel that at all costs it must be checked. He will need to embody that feeling in resolute and persistent effort, but he can ask that divine power will reinforce such effort and be sure that he will not ask this in vain.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL



THOUGHT AND WORSHIP

THE season of Lent is approached by Christians in many different ways. Its meaning for the individual is bound to be affected by his own religious background and experience. For some, Lent is essentially a time of heart-searching, of introspection, of self-denial, and even of self-abasement; a kind of spring-cleaning of one's spiritual house. The value of such an approach need not be denied, though when it is over-emphasized it may easily lead to an unhealthy morbidity. Even in religious experience it is possible to become self-centred, and there is the ever-present and subtle temptation to that spiritual pride which is all too closely associated with extreme self-abasement. For others, the coincidence of the season with spring suggests the thought of renewed life, new beginnings, and a new and more complete dedication of the life with all its potentialities to God.

But whatever his approach, the Christian

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may think of the season as an opportunity and a call to seek a truer understanding of the Christian faith, and a deeper experience of its soul-renewing power; thus fulfilling its main purpose as a preparation for the most complete response to the truth and the claims of the Easter message. If the season is used as an occasion for the special study of our Lord's teaching—his words and the ideal of life which both by precept and example he set before men—it may well be a springtide of new vision and understanding, and time for recognizing afresh and seeking to overcome personal and corporate shortcomings. This will involve both thought and worship; study and prayer. To take some book of the Bible—perhaps one of the gospels—and to read it with renewed application; to study afresh the foundations of Christian belief; to seek to discover the answer to the question, "Why am I a Christian?" and to gain a new grasp of what being a Christian implies in personal and social life, will not only serve to enrich the mind and the whole content of religion: it will enable the Christian to give a better account of his faith and so, as to-morrow's Epistle expresses it, to become a more efficient worker together with God.

But since to be a Christian means much more than to hold certain convictions, it is of vital

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importance to think of the season as an opportunity for entering into a deeper experience of God. The outcome of self-examination and the penitence to which it leads should be a turning away from self to God in a new attitude of humility and receptiveness, which is the condition of renewed life. Just as nature is reborn in the spring, so if Lent be rightly used it will usher in a rebirth of the spirit. And this is what the Church needs to-day. Much as its methods and organization need to be continually readjusted to its task in the contemporary world, its effectiveness as God's instrument for the building of his kingdom will depend mainly upon the quality of its life and its invincible belief in the relevance of that life to human need.

The positive value of Lent to the individual is apt to be lost sight of if past failures are concentrated upon too exclusively. If, however, self-examination is used as a means to an end it will have its place, with worship and study, in the renewing of the spiritual life, and will add reality to the prayer of the Collect that "we may obey thy godly motions in righteousness and true holiness."

HOLY WEEK



THE CROSS AND ITS MEANING

TO the uninitiated multitudes Palm Sunday was a day of triumph; but to the disciples who had heard their Master prophesy his Passion and death it was full of confused questionings. The hosannas which acclaimed his entry into his royal city could not silence the mutterings of the approaching storm. Familiar though Christians are with the tremendous events recorded in the Gospels, and luminous with meaning though the narratives have become, for them as well as for those who, though deeply moved by the Crucifixion, have not reached the decision of faith, the return of Holy Week raises again great questions which have been asked from the beginning: Why is the death of Christ central and crucial in Christianity? What is its meaning? Why are the Gospels, as Dr. Burkitt once said, "a passion-story with an introduction"?

To faith and unfaith alike the Cross must needs be the dominating fact of the earthly career of

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Jesus. Between these two attitudes yawns the gulf which divides meaning from lack of meaning in human life. While faith perceives in Christ's death the fulfilment of his purpose and the completion of his incarnate work, to unfaith it is inescapable evidence of his tragic failure. The humane mind, responsive to the appeal of ethical idealism but lacking the spiritual vision which penetrates the fog of apparent failure, sees in the Crucifixion an epitome of man's bitter frustrations, and the supreme instance of baffled goodness. For Christ to have desired and purposed so much and with such purity and singleness of heart, and then in the end to have been left alone to suffer the fatal disaster of a felon's execution, must appear to earthbound naturalism to have been possible only in a complete breakdown of moral order in human affairs. Seen thus the Cross cannot but be crucial in estimating the value and significance of the life and teaching of Jesus, and it can only intensify the sense of life's futility in the quest of spiritual ideals, to say nothing of the challenge which it offers to the reality of the power and goodness of God.

But in the Cross as the New Testament interprets it all this is changed. The disciples were as completely overwhelmed in mind by the calamity of their leader's execution as uncounted sensitive

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and perplexed men and women have been by the world Calvary of the war. It was the Resurrection which more than restored their confidence, transformed the meaning of the seeming breakdown, and revealed it in the light in which the Lord himself had foreseen it at least from the time of the Temptation, when he deliberately chose a course of action that could lead only to his rejection. In this decision he joined battle with the powers of evil, and from that time onward the movement of the record of his ministry is a progress to Calvary in which he never hesitated or yielded to compromise. To bear without compromise the utmost that evil could inflict upon him and to reject its seductions made spiritual defeat impossible, for failure lay not in suffering the death-dealing strokes of evil but in a compromise which would have avoided them. On Good Friday Christ faced in the Cross the consequence of his self-dedication to the achievement of the purpose of God that evil should be utterly defeated on its own chosen battlefield by his perfect obedience to the divine will.

Breakdowns do not create Gospels: but the New Testament is witness that the Gospel of Christ has been from the first the Gospel of his death. The Resurrection revealed that in that death was achieved the Lord's purpose as God Incarnate

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to purchase man's redemption by the sacrifice of himself. This is the foundation of the good news of the At-one-ment of God and man. Those who contemplate through Holy Week that "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world" cannot fail to discover that there are depths in the Cross which human language cannot express. The true hosannas of Palm Sunday are songs of praise to Christ the Victor over evil, who won redemption for mankind from the bondage of sin and death.

SPRING'S GOSPEL



SYMBOLISM OF EASTER

THE pioneers of Christianity in England were wise when they preserved the name of Eostra, goddess of the spring dawn, and caused the festival of our Lord's Resurrection to be known as Easter. Missionaries less sagacious might have denounced the pagan rites which welcomed spring's return as mere idolatry, to be ignored by every Christian convert. But these teachers followed a better course. What the dawn of spring, with its promise of sunshine, warmth, and food meant to primitive people who had spent the winter months in almost unrelieved cold and darkness can well be imagined. It was right for men to be grateful, and right to express that gratitude to the supernatural being supposed, however mistakenly, to have brought about the change. Here was a foundation on which Christian teachers could build. "Whom ye ignorantly worship, him declare we unto you," was their line of approach, as it had been St. Paul's.

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It would be mistaken to claim any close correspondence between the natural process which results in the reappearance of leaf and blossom and that supernatural power which set the Risen Master among his disciples and makes the soul of man immune from death. What links them is no more than an analogy, yet this is suggestive and, it may be thought, designedly suggestive. Our Lord's method of teaching seems to justify this view. He himself referred constantly to two books for illustrations and arguments in support of his doctrine; one was the Old Testament, and the other the book of nature. Those who doubted the love or power of God were told to consider the wayside flowers, the birds of the air, to learn from the vine or fig-tree, to take to heart lessons suggested by the sowing, growth, and harvesting of the fields. This fact is of permanent significance. To "look through nature unto nature's God" is not, it seems, to indulge in the pathetic fallacy, discovering in the setting of life merely ideas which man himself has placed there. On the contrary, if we believe our Lord's emphatic witness there is an objective truth in the impression made on the human mind and emotions by the natural world. The message of spring is a real message; the happiness of creation at this time, the sense of exhilaration or comfort it brings

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to mankind, its seeming promise of life restored and renewed—these are not vain imaginings; they are nature speaking the message it was designed to bring.

There is real value, then, in remembering Eostra at Eastertide, in rediscovering the spring season to possess a personal source and a personal message. It is good to rejoice in the April growth, but it is better to say with the Psalmist "thou renewest the fact of the earth," looking beyond secondary causes. And that rising again which spring seems to typify is a thought which need not be limited to life beyond the grave, although this be its greatest presage and deepest comfort. Yet it is true also of much else that may have seemed dead and buried; of good habits formed long ago and long ago abandoned, of spiritual earnestness which has been lost, of resolves formed, yet never translated into definite action. Easter affirms triumphantly that not one of them is beyond recall, and that of every good in human nature, or in the stricken world at this time, the Risen Master wills to be the resurrection and the life.

THE EMPTY TOMB



FAITH AND UNFAITH

THE Prayer-book Gospels of the Sundays after Easter are all taken from St. John's Gospel, and the last three are extracts from the Lord's prophetic teaching before his passion, in which he looked beyond the Cross and the Resurrection to the Ascension and the Coming of the Spirit. The failure of attempts to retain real meaning in this teaching when the fact of the Resurrection is rejected adds emphasis to St. Paul's challenge: "If Christ hath not been raised, than is our preaching vain. . . . Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God that he raised up Christ. . . . If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins." In this crucial passage he presses the consequences of negation with a grasp of the issues involved so firm and convincing that it is impossible to minimize the importance of his witness.

"Why is it judged incredible with you if God doth raise the dead?" The answer to this

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question depends upon what is or is not the relation of God the Creator to the world which he created. In the Christian view God, "being Lord of heaven and earth," cannot be controlled by his creation. Against this it is alleged that God is limited in his action by natural laws which govern Nature's unvarying behaviour; and that, even if it is his purpose to liberate mankind from the bondage of death and sin. It is true that science to-day is diffident about drawing any exact line between what is possible or impossible in the physical world, and scientists generally speak with a reticence and humility very different from the confident scientific dogmatism of the last century. But there is nothing that the modern world needs so profoundly as a recovery of faith in the living and transcendent God. "With him," as Christ declared, "all things are possible"; and so he raised his son from the dead and set the seal of his acceptance upon the redeeming sacrifice of the Cross.

The philosophy of Naturalism, with its primary dogma of the unalterable rigidity of nature, is the real root of the rejection of the apostolic witness to the Resurrection. Under its influence the faith of the disciples has been accounted for in ways as unconvincing as they are mutually destructive: pathological visions, visits to the

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wrong tomb, Christ did not really die, "telegrams from heaven" sent to assure his bewildered followers that he was still alive and active in the unseen, spiritist phenomena familiar in modern psychical research—these lame theories of the origin of their belief that Christ had risen are supposed to have explained away the third day, the empty tomb, and the appearances which created the Easter Gospel and changed despair and disillusionment into the joy and confidence of faith.

Let anyone who hesitates to accept it consider again the testimony of those first believers. They rejoiced as those alone would rejoice who could not doubt that they had seen the risen Christ. They lived as if this were true, and their witness emerges triumphant from that supreme test of faith. There was in them a constancy of assurance which was only possible because they knew that they could not have been mistaken or deceived. Their joy had none of the neurotic excitement of the inwardly uncertain who are continually winding themselves up afresh to maintain their belief. They built their life and teaching upon the indubitable fact of what they had "seen and heard"; and this had upon them just the transforming spiritual effect that such a unique experience must needs have had upon

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normal human lives. It opened heaven: it unveiled the face of God: it lifted from the earth the black shadow of death.

“Earth breaks up: time drops away:
In flows heaven with its new day.”

And for them, as for those who have followed them, and “have not seen and yet have believed,” that day has had no ending. For “the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness overcame it not.”

THE EASTER VICTORY



LIFE AND POWER

THE full significance of Easter was hidden from the disciples until the first emotions which stirred in them had passed away. While incredulity, amazement, and rapture possessed them they were in no mood to estimate all that lay behind their Master's reappearance. In those first days they were content to rejoice over his triumph, to exult in an incomparable victory which had followed what seemed like final defeat. If Christian discipleship be to accept the claims of Christ, such discipleship had vanished from the world by the evening of Good Friday. There remained not one believer in those claims, not a lingering hope that they might yet prove to be true. Yet now the Lord was risen indeed, had conquered when conquest seemed impossible, and the joy of knowing this, of acclaiming his personal triumph over the leagued forces of evil, was for the moment the sole and sufficient boon of Easter.

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There are disciples still whose interpretation of the day goes little farther than this. They accept the Resurrection as historically true, year by year they join readily in commemorating its unique victory and in worshipping the victor. Yet to the first disciples Easter had soon gained a profounder meaning, when the Resurrection was seen less as the event of a day than as the disclosure of a continuous power, transforming their conception of God and their whole outlook on life, death and eternity. Hitherto death had seemed the most certain fact in life; now the Christian believer could declare with St. Paul that our Lord by his rising "hath abolished death." Its physical incidence had proved to be no interruption of life; it had lost its supposed importance, its sting was taken away. It is not courage alone which has enabled countless saints to contemplate and meet death with serenity, but the complete assurance, derived from the Easter victory, that death no longer counts, and that, when God wills, to depart and be with Christ is far better. The day which renews and justifies this freedom from fear of death has a transforming power to be welcomed.

But the disciples did not find that the power of the Resurrection began to be operative only when this stage of life was near its end. They

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discovered, on the contrary, that at once it strengthened character and personality. It enabled them to master circumstance and to attain a moral standard which previously had seemed beyond their reach. The consequences of the Master's victory were imparted to and shared by the disciples; in St Paul's phrase, they were risen with Christ. This sense of spiritual reinforcement came when it was most needed, when they must have been close to despair as they recalled their broken promises and desertion of their Lord. But Good Friday had shown them his love and Easter his power. They could be sure now of forgiveness and help; when the full meaning of the Resurrection began to grow plain, they moved as transformed men in a world to be transformed. Each must take his part in that age-long process; it has been truly said that Christianity begins with the regeneration of the individual, and has no belief in the regeneration of society apart from that.

Thus to-morrow brings far more than the commemoration of a victory gained in the remote past. It is a sign of present power, which discloses what God is and what man aided by God may yet make of himself and of this world. It is much to remember with high thanks-

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giving the empty tomb, the joy of those adoring few in Palestine; it is infinitely more to enter on this day into the realized presence of the living Christ.

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THE TWOFOLD WAY



THOUGHTS AFTER EASTER

THE season of the Resurrection is the season of joy; so it was from the beginning, as the Gospels bear witness. There is sufficient assurance of that in the simple words of the fourth evangelist, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." Only those who experienced that greatest of all changes within the soul of man, when the darkness of despair was overcome by the light that came with Christ risen from the dead, could fully express what that meant: and even they not fully.

"I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." So ends the passage selected for to-morrow's gospel. This continuity in joy of which none can deprive the disciples is the result of the restored vision. He sees them, and they him. In their sight of him they recognize him as the same Jesus, as the Master whom they had followed. There is, indeed, something new and strange of which they

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take notice; he comes and goes suddenly and mysteriously in the body of his resurrection. But that makes no difference to the reality of what they see and to their joy in seeing him.

Thus, there is this emphasis upon sight. It is in the gospels; it is in those verses of the great chapter of First Corinthians where St. Paul speaks of appearances of the risen Christ; ending with words that stirred him to the deepest humility, "And last of all he was seen of me also." The witness which the apostles gave to the resurrection, that earliest Christian witness to which everything in Christian preaching and teaching looks back, was the testimony of those who could say "We have seen the Lord." It was not out of their hopes or imaginations that their faith in Christ, that full faith of which the beginnings are to be found in the gospels, was born. The victory that began to overcome the world was the faith that Jesus was the son of God. It was a faith that would never have come to birth unless it had been possible to write the words which proved themselves true at the sepulchre and in the upper room "he saw and believed."

Yet, if all the emphasis were upon sight, then, whatever the joy of the first disciples, there could be no such joy in the Church of later ages. For to it sight is not granted; it must pray and

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wait without any open vision. But the contrast between those who saw and those who do not see should never be regarded as a contrast between a religion of joy and a religion of anxiety. The New Testament rises up in protest against such a misapprehension. It is not only the great texts which forbid it, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed"; "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory"; but the radiance of the New Testament which is the reflection of the Easter light, or rather, its prolongation through the ages, is never dimmed by any suggestion that believers should mourn because from their earthly life their Lord had been taken away.

There was joy for those who saw our Lord. But his visible return was not his only return. There was an invisible return in the joy of which all could and can share, whether or no their eyes had beheld Christ risen from the dead. The abiding comfort and strength and joy which he gives to all who believe in him are theirs through the presence of that other comforter, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus and of his Father. The weeks that pass between Easter and Whitsuntide do not take Christ's people farther from the glad

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music of the Easter victory. They bring nearer the time when by the indwelling of Christ's Holy Spirit that music can sound for ever in their hearts.

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THE ASCENSION



SPIRITUAL AWARENESS

IT is not always easy at first sight to grasp the spiritual significance of the Ascension, and even Christians have sometimes wondered why the Church has laid so much emphasis upon it. Clearly the New Testament is using the language of time and space to express that which transcends both. Did the Ascension merely indicate the end of our Lord's appearances to his disciples, or had it some specific and creative message of its own.

This question can be answered adequately only as the meaning of the Ascension to the disciples is remembered. They had experienced the horror of the Crucifixion, but their despair was transformed into the joy of the Resurrection when they became convinced that their Lord was indeed alive. They had thought that the death of Jesus was the end. The Resurrection was for them a new beginning; but much as our Lord's companionship had meant to them,

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they had yet to learn that they could no longer depend upon his actual visible presence. His presence would be of another kind, no less real, but visible only to the eye of faith—a faith which was abundantly confirmed by their experience of an enhanced capacity to do and to be what they could never have achieved before. The Ascension was for them “the end of the beginning.”

The faith which sees “him who is invisible” is a spiritual capacity, an awareness, which must be cultivated, just as every human faculty must be cultivated if it is to attain its highest potentiality. To find God is not to find him as the man of science makes a discovery in his laboratory, nor as the explorer discovers new territories; it is rather to find him in one’s own experience, sometimes indeed by a direct intuitive awareness of him, but more characteristically in the experience of nature, of beauty, or of human friendship.

The Ascension is a reminder that the presence of Christ is always and everywhere available for him who has faith. Jesus spoke of the Spirit coming to take his place, to be present as man’s helper, his “Comforter” in time of need. Such a thought may be a commonplace to the Christian to-day, but to the disciples it was doubtless new. Men still tend to confine the experience of God

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to church worship, or the individual act of prayer, or perhaps they recognize him in some great event of history. But he is also present in the ordinary daily things, in man's sorrow and suffering, in his work and his happiness, constantly using human experience as the vehicle of his self-revelation, if only there is the spiritual awareness which can recognize him. It is this spiritual sensitivity which distinguishes the truly religious man.

The Collect for Ascension Day speaks of our Lord as having "ascended into the heavens," as if heaven were somewhere far away in space. It could hardly have used any other language to describe this symbolic event. But heaven is not to be thought of spacially; it is a different realm of existence, though the veil seems to be very thin which separates it from human life. Heaven is wherever God is, and where his love can freely operate. When our Lord went to heaven he became infinitely near to all his people. His physical presence had been inevitably localized, and therefore the majority of his followers were deprived of it. By going away he became universally present; ever available to meet the needs of all men everywhere.

WHITSUNTIDE



THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

IN that prolonged period of tension which ended last week the changing fortunes of the war found their reflection in the varying emotions of those who share therein, though most real and often most grievous, was not that of actual combatants. But in whatever uprush of feeling, the will of those to whom one day the victory would be given never for a moment changed from its resolution and direction. There were times when, as for St. Paul and his storm-tossed companions in the Adriatic, neither moon nor stars could be seen, and a detached observer might well have said that all hope of being saved was almost taken away. Yet the compass of this nation's will and those who led it was always steady; it pointed the way, and along that way there was no faltering. And at last the feelings also ceased from their restlessness, from those differences of tone which not even the stability of the will can check. They came to rest in one great

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mingled emotion of thankfulness and relief. The major part of all that needed to be done was over.

In all this there was no illusion. The tasks of war were urgent and perilous beyond any of which history tells. And if it be said that other wars, had their outcome been different, would have changed the past, and much for the worse, it is certainly true that any other result of the war in Europe that has just ended would have meant a future either utterly precarious and destined to experience a still more dreadful ordeal, or delivered over to the too secure keeping of such tyranny and oppression as man has never known. For had the vanquished been the victors, all life would have been conformed so far as possible (and that would have been very far) to one pattern, and for those who attempted any kind of resistance there would have been no mercy.

The sense of relief from the strain of war near at hand and threatening the good life of the future is entirely natural and entirely right. But the good life cannot be built upon any feeling, and to dwell long in the atmosphere of emotional freedom from anxiety has its real dangers. For the tasks of peace, of this peace, would be overwhelming were it not that the will can be as dauntless in the face of them as ever it was when

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its resolution was strained to the uttermost by the perils of war. It is that will, and that alone, which can with patience bring forth good fruit in fields whose soil has been infected by the evil passions that war distils.

That there may be such a good will in man, the Christian turns in prayer at Whitsuntide to the Holy Spirit of God. There are no limits to the extent of that great hymn of petition which begins *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Wherever the Spirit works, there is the loving, creative will of God, the will which would have all men come to the knowledge of the truth. Not apart from, but in and through man is the sphere of that living, divine will, that power which is no impersonal tendency or influence, but the active power of the living God which makes for righteousness. To work in reliance upon, in fellowship with, that power is the one way by which man may prepare himself securely for the future. Through the present power of the Spirit he may, while that future still tarries, lay hands upon it that, when it dawns, the Son of righteousness may arise with healing in his wings. It is the revival, the extension, and the deepening of Christian civilization that the world needs, the love of Christ in the hearts of men and the fashioning of their societies and institutions in accordance

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with that law. It is the law of light and life which is itself the witness to the presence among men of Christ's Holy Spirit, the Illuminator, the Life-giver.

IV
TIMES OF
SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE



DEDICATION

The Magi's Example.

FARM SUNDAY

Cooperation With God.

THE MICHAELMAS MESSAGE

Unseen Powers.

SACRIFICE (*Remembrance Day*)

Members One of Another.

RETROSPECT

Power Over the Past.

PRAYER FOR RENEWAL

Quickening and Revival.

DEDICATION



THE MAGI'S EXAMPLE

IN the first Christian centuries the lovely story of the Epiphany, which will be heard again to-morrow, seemed to lend itself to mystical and intricate interpretations. There is, indeed, a sharp contrast between the austere simplicity of the Gospel narrative and the wealth of imagery, with ingenious symbolism detected in every detail, which Oriental commentators offered as a key to its true meaning.

To suppose, with Origen and others, that the gold, frankincense and myrrh were offered to the Infant Christ in recognition of his sovereignty, divinity, and mortality is, at most, a pious but highly improbable conjecture; to allege, as does Augustine, that the pilgrims were "proud kings" whose worship was due to their "terror" is to let fancy ignore the actual words of the Matthaean Gospel.

The modern reader will be wise if he approaches the Epiphany story from a different point of view.

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He will concede readily enough that it has a symbolic meaning, and will spend no time, as commentators of later ages have done, in arguing about the astronomical nature of the guiding star, or the nationality and occupation of the Magi. Excessive literalism is as unwise as uncurbed imagination if the true meaning and value of the Epiphany story are to be found. As it happens, the most evident truth which it enforces is also one which, for all its simplicity, may be of quite special usefulness at the present time. Apart from its incidental details, it describes how a little group of men, living in an age of political and mental unrest, set aside their doubts, followed guidance which they believed to be divinely given, undertook an arduous journey, consecrated their treasures by offering them at the manger-shrine, and so found happiness.

That by this dedication of their gifts they proved themselves to be, in the most direct sense, "wise men" is a truth abundantly confirmed by Christian experience. Their example may suggest the most effective cure for that mental and spiritual lassitude which is lamentably prevalent to-day. It may be due in part to the reaction inevitably following the strain of war, and in part to the disappointment of exaggerated hopes about the immediate sequel of peace. But, whatever its

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source, the extent and evil of the malady cannot be doubted. For vast numbers of people it has taken the zest out of life. They carry on their work, but with little satisfaction and considerable boredom. Their recreations seem to have lost their savour. They have not broken away from their religious faith, yet belief or disbelief no longer present themselves as vitally important, and the churches feel that downright opposition would be easier to meet and to overcome than this tepid mood, with its utter lack of enthusiasm.

But the example of the Magi prescribes a remedy for such anaemia of mind and soul. "Take your gifts," it seems to run, "and dedicate them to God. No matter whether they are large or small; they are your gold, frankincense, myrrh—the best you have. That exacting and responsible work in the office, that task in shop, school, farm, or factory, that monotonous household duty—dedicate the work itself and your powers of doing it to God. Bring your daily life into your religion; your religion into your daily life. Speak about them, as a friend may speak to a friend, in your prayers. Be very sure that every honest effort is seen and valued by God. Then—it may be by slow degrees, yet quite certainly—the clouds will break; the lost zest and enjoyment of life will return." The war revealed

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one aspect of the power of dedication ; Epiphany discloses another ; and has there ever been a time when the need of recognizing and using it was greater ?

“ FARM SUNDAY ”



COOPERATION WITH GOD

TO-MORROW will be “ Farm Sunday,” and it was a wise resolve which linked this new institution with the observance, 15 centuries old, of Rogation-tide. Together they seem rightly to relate work and natural law with prayer and supernatural power. In a way which the simplest folk can understand they illustrate that profound principle of man’s cooperation with God which goes far to interpret and ennoble human existence. Man, it seems, has not been left by his Creator to strive unaided for ideals beyond his reach, with no resource beyond his own tragically inadequate strength. Yet, on the other hand, he is no mere spectator, whose part it is to watch while the divine purpose for the world, unhelped and unhindered by him, is gradually accomplished. Instead, the divine aim, which is the world’s redemption, must be carried through by cooperation between God and man. Most clearly man is impotent to achieve it without the help of God, yet it is no

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less true that God himself, by his own decree, is unable to bring about the fulfilment of his design without the assistance of man.

Our Lord himself made frequent use of the tilling of the soil, the sowing of the seed, the reaping of the crops as a symbol of this cooperation. Behind those secondary factors which are classified as laws of nature he discerned the Father's providence as their ultimate source. No farmer could succeed who disregarded these natural laws; he must investigate and study them, and he will learn in a measure to control them; yet a power beyond human wisdom must operate to change seed into blade, blade into ear. God must do his part, but no less the farmer would fail who said, "God will do all; I need bestow no care or labour upon my fields."

The need of divine and human cooperation in this form of activity is a truth which "Farm Sunday" sets forth. Here it is obvious enough, but the universal application of the principle is not always realized. When it is, it lends to human life new value and coherence. In the background is God's plan, involving nothing less than the redemption of the universe. As yet only fragments of this scheme can be discerned, yet man can be sure that every effort he makes against either a social wrong or his own individual

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sins is contributing something to the plan's fulfilment, is an act of partnership with God. It may be resistance to evil on a gigantic world-scale, it may be a child's fight against a temptation to steal sixpence, it may be the performance of the simplest good deed or the speaking of a kindly sentence, but it counts as an aid to God. From this knowledge comes the sense of fellowship with God which unites those who work together for a common cause.

The analogy suggested by "Farm Sunday" includes also a caution against impatience when progress seems slow. Man looks for quick results when God does not. "The husbandman hath long patience," wrote St. James, and in no pursuit is this virtue more necessary than in farming. There are times when it seems as if God's cause were making no growth, but the wise will be content to rest in the Lord and wait patiently on him. Let man continue to do his part; assuredly God will never cease to do his. Often, too, the Christian is disheartened by the slowness of his own spiritual development. Yet he never toils alone, and the seed on the good ground, said our Lord, are they who, "having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

THE MICHAELMAS MESSAGE



UNSEEN POWERS

A STRANGE contrast seems to divide the secular and sacred aspects of this 29th day of September. Most people think of it only as quarter-day, a date of note in the business calendar, when accounts are made up and payments fall due. But this quarter-day is the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, affirming the existence of spiritual beings who move unseen among men and women and influence their lives.

Yet the seeming incongruity between these two associations of the day may well prove to be unreal. Certainly the writers of the Bible would not have found them incompatible; from first to last, from the angels of Eden to the heavenly hosts of Revelation, the Bible treats this supernatural order as most natural. Gabriel of the Annunciation is no subjective vision, but as actual as the maiden he addresses; the angelic hosts round Elisha are as real as the Syrian armies they discomfit. It never occurs to any writer in either

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Testament to describe the activity of angels as a marvel, to be argued for or explained; all of them assume it to be everywhere recognized as a normal part of the Divine scheme which shaped and controls the universe. And this view, it need hardly be added, derives its strongest support from many recorded sayings of our Lord.

Such belief in unseen spiritual helpers should be easier in modern days than it was in the Victorian age. Belief in angels certainly was not assisted by the conventionalized pictures produced by artists of that period, while man was apt to suppose that all the chief forces at his disposal must be within the range of his physical vision. Now, on the contrary, his use of invisible forces has become a commonplace of his daily life, he has tamed the unseen power which rives the skies with lightning to glow sedately in his room, to cook his meal, to ring his bell, to bring him the words of a voice across 3,000 miles. He is still but on the verge of learning what inconceivable things, either of healing and enrichment or of cataclysmic destruction, may be brought to pass by invisible rays. Through all time these forces have existed, and now as before they are themselves invisible, yet now man is staggered by his first perception of the potential results they may achieve. The last six years, too, have shown him that the

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unseen powers of mind and spirit exceed material force in strength. Indeed, he begins to feel that things seen are pervaded throughout and dominated by things unseen, that the material universe is but the vesture of the spiritual, and that spirit is the primordial and final reality.

To-day therefore it seems highly illogical to dismiss the belief which Michaelmas asserts as no more than a survival of childlike superstition. When the presence and potencies of invisible powers in the natural world have been revealed, when the unseen spiritual element in man masters his physical setting, can it seem incredible that God should have created unseen spiritual beings, delegating to them a share in man's protection and guidance? Some such belief will be found in almost every form of religion. No doubt it has often been developed in unwarranted detail; already in the New Testament period it became necessary to warn the Colossians against "angel-worship." But such developments find no countenance in our Lord's teaching. At Michaelmas it is enough to shun the error of the Sadducees, finding comfort, as did our Lord himself, in the thought of God's watchmen, who in ways beyond human sight and understanding accomplish the divine bidding and minister to the needs of man.

SACRIFICE



MEMBERS ONE OF ANOTHER

THE idea of sacrifice seems to be inseparable from religion. In primitive worship it may be the offering of the fruits of the earth or of a man's most cherished possession, or even of human life itself. But whatever form it takes it is clearly the expression of some profound impulse in human nature. The late war has made the world all too familiar with sacrifice, but this familiarity has not dimmed its shining quality. The story of some special act in which life has been jeopardized or given for others always touches the deepest springs of human response. Such an act helps to raise the stature of the human race as it throws a vivid light upon the nature of man. The world owes more than it can ever repay or even estimate to those who, whether in the realm of exploration, or science, or religion, have made the ultimate sacrifice in their dedication to the service of their fellow-men.

In the Cross is seen history's supreme example

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of self-giving. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." To see the Cross in its true light it must be understood as human love submitting itself to human hatred and blindness in order to reveal the depth and outreach of divine love. Only, it would seem, in this way could the true nature of God be revealed. The acceptance of the Cross was for Jesus a voluntary act, which is what true sacrifice must always be.

On Remembrance Day the thought of sacrifice will be much in people's minds. It is not victory that will chiefly be remembered but the cost of it—a price which is not paid once for all but which continues to make its almost unbearable demands as long as life lasts. And in spite of the fact that men have not yet reaped the fruits of this sacrifice, time will never rob it of its grandeur nor lessen its appeal to what is noblest in human nature. The value of sacrifice indeed does not depend upon whether or no it achieves its object; there is something absolute about it; the act itself has permanent spiritual value and significance.

To-morrow should be more than occasion for thinking of what is past. If the day is to be fruitful it must evoke the response of dedication. Not all are called upon to make the degree of sacrifice which total war demands of the fighting

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man, and indeed of many a civilian, but life is always making its demands for sacrifice; it is one of the conditions of its persistence. The new world of which men are thinking, and for which many are praying and working, will be achieved, so far as it depends upon human effort, only as men are willing to meet the cost of it. And, as is being realized to-day, the price will be heavy. All successful corporate life presupposes and is built upon sacrifice, if only because the legitimate desires, and even the rights, of the individual must never be allowed to conflict with what is for the good of all.

To meditate on the example of our Lord is the surest way to enter into the true meaning of sacrifice. If at this season men's minds can be drawn to contemplate that surpassing act of self-dedication, and to pray for a measure of Christ's spirit, the observance of the day will mark a step forward towards a fuller realization of the truth that "we are members one of another," and so will help to lay more deeply and firmly the foundation of a better and a more united world.

RETROSPECT



POWER OVER THE PAST

NATURALLY enough, in these closing days of the year, the thoughts of most people look backward to the events, both public and personal, of the last twelve months. Some will cast up, as it were, a balance-sheet, setting failures, sorrows, and disappointments against progress, joys, and good fortune, and attempting at the end to discover which preponderate. Inevitably there will be frequent "errors and omissions" in such calculations so far as they relate to public affairs; not perhaps for another half-century will it be possible to estimate with precision the gains and losses brought about by the tremendous events of 1945. But the individual and private account can be reckoned up more easily, and to undertake the task is well worth while. What may not be evident at first sight is that the resulting balance depends far less upon the things that have happened than upon the kind of person to whom they have happened.

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Indeed, such common sayings as "the past is over and done with" and "you cannot alter the past" are but imperfectly true. A man's past is not "done with"; it has entered into his being and influences almost every moment of his present and future. Again, he will find that a changed point of view can utterly transform his past. St. Paul's early years, for instance, must have had one meaning for him when he looked back on them while still a Pharisee and quite another when he did this after becoming a Christian. In this real sense, then, man has power to alter his past, making it a source of happiness or misery according to his use of this power. And the factor which beyond any other contributes to its beneficent working is a vital faith in God. Anyone who has no place for God in his life may feel at a year's end that it has been lucky or unfortunate for him. But it has brought him no special message, and to ponder its unalterable events seems to him a waste of time. The future alone matters, and he is beset by hopes and fears as he looks forward.

But the view of the man who has learnt to trust and obey God is very different. Whatever of deep sorrow, whatever of radiant happiness the twelve months have brought him, he is conscious of a purpose and a message throughout, and these

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he is eager to discern. He can see only a little of their full meaning, yet that little gives him profound reassurance. His religion completely changes his past. He is aware of a divine love and power which have helped him in his darkest hours, and this experience makes him certain that the Friend who has guided him thus far will not fail him in the time to come. The more he meditates on the past the greater his freedom from over-anxiety about the future; the power he has gained of seeing in a new light all that lies behind transforms his whole outlook. And that outlook is not limited to the present stage of existence. Power to enjoy the past, wrote a Latin poet, doubles the length of life: "*Hoc est Vivere bis, vita posse priore frui.*" But to find pleasure in the past, through faith in the God who shaped it, is not merely to have an enriched life in this world but to receive a pledge of life everlasting.

PRAYER FOR RENEWAL



QUICKENING AND REVIVAL

“**W**HAT’S time? Leave Now to dogs and apes. Man has Forever!” But man lives his life on earth in time and place, and therefore time tells. To-morrow’s “Stir up” collect is a reminder of this, and that another Christian year is coming to an end and another Advent beginning. So the sequence of the calendar runs, year in year out, going out and coming in, with its rhythmic wealth of Christian teaching. Stale and threadbare though the cycle may sometimes appear to outsiders, the convinced churchman at once responds to the note of urgency in this collect’s cry to God for an inward quickening of spiritual energy which will bear the enduring fruit of full and active living.

“Stir up” is the English rendering of the first word, “excita,” of a series of collects from the old Latin service-books. Of these three were discarded by the makers of the Anglican Prayer-book: this, for the Sunday next before Advent,

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being retained together with the "O Lord, raise up (*excita*), we pray thee, thy power and come among us" of the Sunday before Christmas. It is as if the Church at the end of another year's worship and teaching were especially conscious of the danger of a descent from the heights of faith and vision to the depths of the trite and the familiar. "Stir up," arouse, incite to action, "the wills of thy faithful people," lest worship should become routine and teaching fruitless. If "the lie in the soul" is poison to the spirit, the heart hardened by familiarity no less surely forfeits in the temporal the things eternal.

The Gospel for this Sunday is the story of the feeding of the five thousand and Christ's use of the meagre means possessed by the disciples for meeting the needs of the multitude. There is striking significance in the command "gather up the fragments that remain that nothing be lost," if in this context it is seen to refer to the food of truth provided for worshippers by the Church week by week throughout the year. Nothing avenges itself in experience more surely than the neglect of vital truths and the treatment of them as if they could be stored away with impunity in the soul's lumber-rooms because they are familiar, and be taken as read without further attention because they are not disputed. Of all waste

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the most injurious is the disuse of the divine provision for man's spiritual sustenance and support. Of all salvage the most important is that which "gathers up the fragments" of neglected truths and restores priorities which have been first obscured and then forsaken and lost.

In times of need and emergency faith instinctively turns to God for help and renewal. The Bible contains many of these prayers, notably the classic appeal of the Hebrew prophet which focuses and expresses the desire of all who are oppressed by a sense of religious frustration: "Revive thy work, O Lord, in the midst of the years: in the midst of the years make it known." Wrung from Habakkuk's inmost soul, that prayer is like numbers of others uttered during times when things proceed but do not arrive. Such was the period which followed the first great war and prepared the way for the second. Now again the nations appear to be dangerously lacking in prophetic leadership and direction. Exhaustion has brought reaction, and confronted by prodigious problems this has not yet been succeeded by a renewal of vigour and resolution. To the Christian the situation's first and greatest need is apparent. "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people": deliver them from the torpor of indecision, break up their inertia,

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nerve them to action, give them the inspiration of purpose and the staying-power of dedication. When the Church is tepid in its service and uncertain in its witness, where else is there hope of the spiritual power and vision which the time demands, if the world is to recover its sanity and restore its balance? The trumpets of God are sounding their challenge: it is time for Christians everywhere to bestir themselves to action.

V
CHRISTIAN TRAINING AND
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THE REALISM OF SELF-DISTRUST



POWER FOR WEAKNESS

THE Sexagesima collect is an appeal for the fortifying aid of God, and its petition is based upon the claim that "we put not our trust in anything that we do." Its close connexion with the Epistle, which is St. Paul's historic description of the amazing experiences of his apostolic service, is at once apparent. In this the Apostle states the reasons for his unequalled right to rely upon his own achievement, if it were not that the power which has inspired and upheld him through all his trials and conflicts has been the power of Christ and not his own. It is unfortunate that the Anglican shortening of the Epistle in the old service-books, which was twice its present length, has involved the omission of the great sentence which is the climax of the argument: "He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my power is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly therefore," he goes on,

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“will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

“We put not our trust in anything that we do.” Nowhere in Bible or Prayer Book can be found a statement more challenging, or which raises more decisively in the present world situation the issues between Christian faith and those who reject Christianity’s offers of supernatural aid and direction. If nothing that unaided man can undertake or do can be relied upon to come to full fruition, and if failure and frustration are the necessary consequence of self-dependent human effort, there lies open to him an inescapable choice between two courses: he must abandon hope and yield to despair, or he must look beyond and above himself for an access of new power with which to solve his problems and overcome his difficulties. Discovery of his own impotence will either bring to man a prophecy of doom which tolls the funeral bell of his schemes and purposes, or it may lead to such a complete collapse of his self-reliance that it becomes “a budding morrow in midnight” and opens the door to a great new beginning of life and progress.

There are times when the overshadowing darkness of the organized lie of man’s self-completeness successfully obscures vital spiritual issues, and smooth deceptions are widely accepted

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as ultimate realities. But the hour strikes at last when evasion can exist no longer and only realism is possible. At such a time even the most violent enemies of faith have to confess that the secular mind has reached "the end of its tether," that all its hopes have miscarried, and that the future holds nothing that can rationally be expected to prevent final disaster. "The severer our thinking," writes a famous modern prophet of self-sufficient rationalism, "the plainer it is that the dust-carts of time trundle the dust off to the incinerator and there make an end of it." Here for all to see is the exposure of the futility of self-reliant man who, immured in a solitude of his own making, has cut off his natural communications with heaven, and, having banished God from the human scene, finds that he has created a desert around him where all that is left to him is to die.

That way madness lies. Man created in the image of God can never consent finally to surrender the natural hopes of his immortal spirit. Human nature "closed in upon itself" must needs break out, and rejecting the delusion that man is a self-sufficient enclosed will seek what M. Jacques Maritain describes as "the energies of a spiritual and social resurrection" that can only be given by "a love which fixes the centre of his life infinitely higher than the world and temporal

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history.” Then and thus alone can he find his lost soul and begin to live his true life, whose first law is that the temporal in him lies under sentence of death unless it is linked at every point with the eternal. A man’s prayers, therefore, must always begin and end with the confession that “we put not our trust in anything that we do.”

FEAR AND FAITH



A DISEASE AND ITS REMEDY

THERE is no surer means by which a Christian can test the adequacy of his personal religion than by its success or failure in dissolving fear. Religion, it is true, supplies only one of the various methods by which fear can be counteracted. It may be neutralized by a deliberate blindness, a closing of the eyes to unwelcome facts. It may be repressed, at least at moments of crisis, by a resolute act of the will, an effort rightly gaining the name of courage. But the action of Christian faith upon fear is of a different kind; it neither ignores nor represses, but dissolves fear, causing it to vanish like snow in spring sunshine. Of all remedies for fear this is the most effective and enduring, and it was used by our Lord himself. Through the latter days of his ministry on earth he moved intrepidly towards the Cross. So far from putting it out of sight, he kept it steadily in view, and spoke of it often to his disciples. So far from merely mastering terror by the

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power of will after an inward struggle, he could go forward serenely, by reason of his absolute trust in the heavenly Father.

These are days when to study our Lord's attitude towards fear is specially instructive. Clearly he regarded it as a malady, a poisonous source of evil and misery, from which man needed deliverance. The truth of that view has become most evident. The ultimate aim of the United Nations is not merely to devise formulas or frame verbal agreements, but to end those suspicions, distrusts—in a word, those fears—which, if left to rankle and increase, may engender wars. Our Lord was more directly concerned with the effects of moral disease on the individual life. He lived in Palestine at a time when already "men's hearts were failing them because of fear." He saw that fear caused much wrong-doing and was the source of misery to its victims. Yet in his view it was utterly needless. It should indeed be impossible for anyone who had really understood and accepted that revelation of the Father which he had given. "Why are ye so full of fear?" he asked his disciples when he had calmed a storm; "How is it that ye have no faith?" In those two sentences he recognized the malady and indicated the cure.

Those sentences might still be the Master's

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comment on much pessimistic talk among Christians in our own days. Can they have forgotten already the miracles of deliverance wrought within the last six years? "Why are ye so full of fear? How is it that ye have no faith?" Equally, the trust in God which the Christian should feel concerning his individual life can be a reasoned faith, fortified by experience. It will not mistakenly assume that he will always be supernaturally protected against danger, misfortune, and suffering. The incidence of these may be part of God's plan in shaping his character. What he can be sure of is that, in St. Paul's phrase, no possible "distress or tribulation" can "separate him from the love of God"; that if escape is not given quickly, strength to bear will be; and that, at worst, "the sorrows of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory" of what lies beyond this stage of life. Therefore faith liberates him from fear, and he can address his soul with the Psalmist's counsel and promise: "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage; and he shall strengthen thine heart."

THE STRAIN UPON FAITH



CREED AND CIRCUMSTANCE

TO-MORROW the Church keeps the festival of John the Baptist, who revived the message of prophecy after it had been silenced for over four centuries. To most readers of the New Testament he is not, perhaps, among its most attractive characters, but they often fail to realize the difficulty and the immense importance of the work he accomplished. "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" was the emphatic tribute paid to him by our Lord himself.

It is therefore the more interesting and, in a sense, the more consoling, to find that the man of whom this was said suffered from those moods of depression and doubtful faith which the average Christian, with no special claim to saintliness, has to endure. It was John who, according to the Fourth Gospel, in the early days of our Lord's ministry discerned his true nature and exclaimed: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the

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sin of the world." Yet it was the same John who afterwards sent disciples to Jesus with the anxious question: "Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?" Some commentators, reluctant to admit that the Baptist could ever feel doubts of this kind, have argued that it was not his own but his disciples' belief that needed reassurance. This is quite untenable, because our Lord's reply is not directed to the disciples but is a personal message to the Baptist himself: "Go and show John," it begins.

But the quest for an explanation seems needless; the facts speak for themselves and are true to human nature. When John with strong faith recognized in Jesus of Nazareth the Divine Saviour of the world, he himself was conducting a mission by the Jordan with striking success. Crowds from every part thronged to hear him, and even the Pharisees, the official leaders of religion, joined themselves to his audience. When he sent disciples to ask doubtingly: "Art thou he that should come?" he himself was in prison; his work had ended in seeming failure, and it would be not long before Herod put him to death. The months went by, and no news had come that Jesus had proclaimed himself the Messiah. The partial failure of his faith—it was no more than partial, for he remained sure that, if this were not

the Messiah, one would appear later—was induced by his misfortunes. It was one thing to be bravely confident in sunshine by the Jordan; it was quite another to retain that confidence in Herod's dungeon.

There is real comfort for many people in this story of the Baptist. The fact that his faith seemed to have wavered did not check the magnificent eulogy which our Lord pronounced upon him, and Jesus himself would know on the Cross how circumstance might seem for the time to eclipse faith, and to compel the cry: "Why hast thou forsaken me?" The Christian disciple need not distress himself too much if he finds his faith somewhat dimmed in times of extreme misfortune, or when physical weakness and pain react, as they do intensely, upon his spiritual life. The right attitude at such times is to be content with that degree of faith which he can retain. It may be very faint and imperfect, but Divine Love makes allowances, and knows the degree in which exterior factors and bodily suffering injure the life of the soul. The right course of him who is afflicted by this loss of faith is to hold fast to what he can and to wait patiently upon God. For presently, perhaps when he least expects it, the darkness will pass and the light return.

DISAPPOINTMENTS



THE USE OF FAILURE

FEW events in life impose a greater strain on faith or test character more severely than a sudden defeat of prolonged effort, a breakdown of confident anticipation. A disappointment of this kind is apt at the moment to seem a crushing disaster, and is felt all the more keenly when the success desired and denied is wholly free from any thought of personal gain. The man who has worked for nothing beyond his own fame or wealth or ease will resent failure bitterly, yet in his heart he will know that he did not deserve to succeed. But what seems like final defeat is far harder to bear when it befalls someone who has planned and toiled indefatigably in the service of others. He may have been trying to benefit the whole nation, or a large section of the community, or a mere handful of villagers, but, whatever the scope of his endeavour, his whole heart was set upon its achievement. Then, when at last he seemed on the verge of success, his hopes

were crushed. Through some unexpected cause—perhaps a turn in public affairs, perhaps a failure of his own health—it became evident that he would never witness the triumph of the cause or project to which he had given himself unsparingly.

Some such experience is far from uncommon. It recalls the pathetic last scene in the life of Moses, as described in the final chapter of Exodus. He had known himself to be the divinely chosen leader of his people. He had brought them through the perils of the wilderness, had overcome attacks from without and ingratitude and revolt among those he led. Yet after all there was to be for him no triumphant entry into the promised land; no more would be allowed him than a tantalizing view from Mount Pisgah of its streams and fertile valleys. It is impossible to suppose that his disappointment was not keen. Many an ardent worker—religious leader, statesman, philanthropist, social reformer—has had to share that feeling; has discerned the promised land from afar while forced to know that not by him or in his time would it be entered. Sometimes this trial is not merely personal but widespread. The sequel to any General Election provides an obvious example. Whether one political party or another wins makes no difference; among the losers inevitably there will be many who

feel that all their unselfish toil for the ideals and principles they believe to be right has proved vain.

Yet disappointments are also opportunities; when rightly used they become a means of strengthening character. To the Christian they have a significance which could not be perceived by Moses or any saint of the Old Testament. He will recollect that no failure seemed so complete as our Lord's at the end of his ministry, and will note how wholly unembittered he was by this experience, how he said not a word of reproach to his faithless disciples when he met them again. So the modern disciple need not allow any failure of personal hopes to weaken his faith either in God or man. He will resolve to make the best not merely of things but of people. He will be sure that, often by means he cannot understand, the fulfilment of God's purpose for this world moves forward, and he will think of that promised land where failures are ended and all, understanding all, unite to serve and adore.

POSITIVE RELIGION



THE ENHANCEMENT OF LIFE

CHRISTIANITY has often been criticized on the ground that it inhibits men; that wherever experience would seem to be attractive and rewarding it confronts them with a "thou shalt not"; that of any two possible choices they must always take the more difficult way, and that therefore to be a Christian is to accept an impoverished life rather than one that is rich, complete and satisfying. Such a criticism results from a failure to understand the clear teaching both of our Lord and of St. Paul. "I am come," Jesus said, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

No one who has read to-morrow's Epistle with attention and imagination could think of the Christian religion as consisting mainly of negatives, of what a man is not to be. The ten commandments, with their negative prohibitions, were no doubt essential in the earlier stages of Hebrew religion, as the child before

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he is capable of developing the positive social virtues must be taught that there are many things he may not do. But when St. Paul depicts the Christian character, as with profound insight and eloquence he frequently does, he carries his reader into an entirely different region of thought and spiritual experience—out of the realm of mere law and prohibition into that of love. “Above all these things put on love,” than which nothing could be more positive and creative. Almost every word he uses as he analyses the Christian character in this Epistle has a positive content; and the qualities of which he speaks are to be “put on” as a garment. They are something added; they do not impoverish, they enrich. The beautiful catalogue of spiritual gifts which St. Paul designates “the fruit of the Spirit” are so positive in their content that he who possesses them, even in a limited measure, has begun to learn the secret of that personal integration which always makes for spiritual power.

A life which is based upon a religion of negations must always be weak and ineffectual; it will lack courage and enterprise, since it will be dominated largely by fear. It was no such religion that in the first century “turned the world upside down.” The idea of “self-ex-

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pression" can be and often has been so interpreted as to be egoistic and selfish and aggressive. Yet it is the purpose of the Christian religion to enable men to become themselves, but themselves at the highest possible levels; not to negate personality but to enhance it. As the spirit of Jesus more and more permeated the lives of the Apostles they did not cease to express their individual characteristics; their own inherent qualities were purified and thereby raised to new levels of potency.

The secret of such attainment is suggested by the words which sum up St. Paul's list of virtues: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." The word "dwell" is significant, for that which inhabits the mind tends to become the mainspring of character and action. Christian character is a process of gradual attainment. No merely casual attention to the word of Christ avails, whether to his word as recorded in the Gospels or as it speaks directly to the soul. As the Christian ponders the sayings of our Lord, thus making the word of Christ his own, he enters into that communion with him which is at once the condition of the good life and the source of a power which enables men to rise to their own highest possibilities.

REASONABLE SERVICE



THE RELIGION OF THE MIND

TO serve God with the mind is the clear duty of every Christian, though such service is often found difficult to achieve. It is not easy to understand the part that the mind should play in the life of the spirit; but obviously a mainly emotional or formal religion makes a demand upon human personality which is less than complete. In to-morrow's Epistle St. Paul exhorts his readers to present to God a rational offering of service, that is, an offering which includes the whole personality—body as well as spirit; mind as well as emotion. The exhortation is no doubt given a specific reference, the offering of the body as "a living sacrifice" to God, but the words are capable of a much wider application.

The standard which this sets for the Christian is extremely high and even rigorous. It implies for him the necessity of a religion which he has made his own and has not merely received

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at second-hand. Christian belief, indeed, must often begin with the acceptance of dogma on the authority of the Church, but it should gradually be transmuted into personal conviction, only so can it become a man's own possession. St. Paul is bold enough to speak of the Gospel he preached as "my Gospel." What he had learned of Christ from others had passed through the medium of his own thought and experience, and had inevitably been modified and supplemented in the process. And because of this his preaching was characterized by a note of authority and a convincing power which no mere acceptance of traditional belief could have given him.

In a deeply true sense every Christian should be able to say "my Gospel." The Christian message has its permanent and unchangeable elements, but as an individual makes it his own it becomes something new, something creative. "If any man be in Christ"—and the phrase "in Christ" seems to imply a conscious personal experience—"he is a new creation." Whenever a man submits himself to the spirit of Christ an original expression of Christianity has come to birth. He has brought, unconscious though he may be of the fact, an enrichment to the common stock of religious experience,

and of religious thought. The result may not be anything obviously dramatic or revolutionary, but in some degree, however small, fresh light has been thrown on the meaning of the Christian religion, and on the possibilities of a human life when it is dedicated to God and empowered by him

So with the relating of the Christian Gospel to the ordinary life of the world. To serve God with the mind is to attempt to discover his will as it bears upon man's daily work, his personal relationships, and the great and often almost intractable problems of corporate life. Democracy, it is said, demands for its success intelligence and perpetual vigilance; religion, if it is to be effective, makes a no less comprehensive demand. This is not to say that the simple and unlearned cannot enter into the deepest and most fruitful religious experience, they can and do fulfil God's purposes and produce "the fruit of good works"; but it does mean that the "reasonable service" which the Christian offers to God must include the whole of his personality. His religion must never be a mere department of his life; its purpose is to pervade, inspire, and progressively transform the whole of it, so that in his every activity he is seeking to render acceptable service to God.

WISDOM



THE MIND AND THE WILL

IN to-morrow's Collect the prayer is made that the ministers and stewards of Christ's mysteries may prepare his way "by turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just." These last are remarkable words and deserve a closer attention than, perhaps, they are often given.

Both the Greek and the Jew possessed and cherished the ideal of the wise man. But as to what the ideal signified there was a difference, very much in emphasis, to some extent in substance. The lover of wisdom, the Greek philosopher, was a man of intellectual energy and attainment. The light that was within him brought illumination to this problem or that. The earliest Greek philosophers were the scientists, physicists, as they would be called to-day, who tried to answer the question of the fundamental element out of which all things had developed. The conception of wisdom as the fruit of the trained and acute

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mind, as intellectual achievement, is one which belongs to the Greek tradition, though, particularly in the case of Socrates, it is balanced if not outweighed by a more ethical idea. When Socrates told the young men of Athens that instead of looking after material advantages they ought to be looking after the good of their souls, he would certainly have regarded his advice as directed towards their growth in wisdom.

With the Jew, the ethical aspect of wisdom is predominant; the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament and the Apocrypha being the surest proof thereof. Wisdom is the moral insight which preserves a man from the folly of going after evil things, and keeps him obedient to the law of righteousness, and enables him to walk in God's way. The fool who has said in his heart "there is no God" is not the thinker guilty of intellectual error, but the evildoer who likes to imagine that he can sin with impunity. In the Book of Wisdom the Jewish and the Greek conceptions come together to some extent, but the contrast between the wise and the foolish remains primarily a moral one.

Both traditions have their value, and it is no depreciation of the legacy of Greece to say that there is a special need for attention to the Hebrew idea of wisdom as inseparable from moral in-

tegrity and steadfastness. That is the safeguard against any identification of wisdom with intellectual agility and a cleverness which is careless of right and wrong. The wisdom that sees the moral issues of things and refuses to be deceived about the consequences of wrong decisions is a spiritual good for which there is, indeed, no substitute. No amount of technical ability and organizing power can take its place; not in them lies the cure for the world's sickness.

Such wisdom is a gift of God: but it is a gift for which man must prepare himself, looking to God from whom comes every good gift and every perfect boon. Attention stands at the beginning of that progress in learning and doing God's will which has perseverance as its continuing sign. The attainment is not reserved for a special class of religious devotees; it is not like the initiation into secret mysteries of some peculiar cult. But while no one is excluded, no one can pass through this open door if his practice of religion is merely casual and perfunctory. When it is no more than that it is small wonder if those who make no profession of walking in the Christian way doubt whether the Christian name is more than a conventional label. Yet how false such a conclusion would be there is evidence enough to show, drawn not from theory but from experi-

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ence. Human life would be immeasurably poorer apart from the real, spiritual enrichment which has come into it and through those who have learnt in the school of Christ a wisdom of the just which is the fruit of a patient waiting upon God. It is by the light of the wisdom not of this world that this world may find its way towards health and peace.

SERENITY



THE SPIRIT-FILLED LIFE

ST. Paul's strange exhortation "be filled with the Spirit" might seem to suggest that such a transforming experience can be easily attained; that all that is needed is a mere act of will. But he would not have asserted that the self-emptying which must precede the filling of the soul with the divine spirit is a simple matter, or that it can be accomplished without the help of God. It is a gradual and continuous process, of which it can never be said that it is complete, involving an ever deepening sense of humility and dependence upon God. In to-morrow's Epistle St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, speaks of the Spirit of God as the source of exaltation and joy. It was no easy world in which the Ephesian Christians were living; at any time they might be called upon to pay the supreme price for their faith. But their joy, he implies, would not arise out of their environment, it would flow out from the deep springs of the spiritual life.

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At Pentecost the Spirit was essentially the creator of a new unity; the disciples became "one body." In like manner, when the Spirit is given access to the life of the individual the diverse and often conflicting elements of personality are brought increasingly into that harmony which is the ground of peace and serenity. Much more than the outward circumstances, it is the inner conflicts of the soul which destroy peace and happiness. Jesus exhorted his disciples to "be of good cheer," but at the same moment he warned them that in the world they would have tribulation.

Such a reminder is not irrelevant to-day. To desire happiness, or even to think of it as desirable in the midst of the world's continuing tragedy, may appear to indicate an attitude of sheer self-centredness, a shutting of one's eyes to men's suffering. But happiness is due to a state of mind which arises out of its own appropriate spiritual condition, and is therefore in a true sense a by-product. As many realized during the worst days of the war, it is never dependent upon circumstances. Even in the midst of the uncertainties and tragedies of the war there was much serenity which nothing seemed able to destroy. Many indeed found a new delight in simple things like the songs of birds, the colours of autumn, and some in an absorbing hobby. Above all many also

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experienced a new and surprising inner quietness which grew out of their faith in God.

The supreme end of life is not happiness, but there is something lacking which is essential to true living in a life to which happiness is almost unknown, and there is little to commend a religion which does not contribute to it. For the Christian to give way to despair, or to allow his spirit to be crushed by the burden of the world's suffering, so that it robs him of all happiness and serenity, is to miss one of the greatest gifts of God's spirit. And it is not only the Christian himself whose life is impoverished; he is depriving the world—as it faces a future in which these qualities will be of paramount importance—of a measure of the steadying gift of hope and calm confidence. The essential condition of the spirit-filled life is the receptive attitude, which, along with the gift of the Spirit itself, is freely offered to those who with sincerity and humility will seek it.

LEX ORANDI



THE GREATNESS OF TRUE RELIGION

THERE is a story that Michael Angelo once went into the studio of a young painter, and found there a picture in the making. In the absence of the artist, the great master compressed his comments upon the work into one word, which he wrote up, and then went on his way. It was the word "Amplius." The picture was on too small a scale; it needed a greater range and a fuller treatment if it was to be worthy of its subject.

This counsel is as pertinent to religion as to painting. For religion greatly suffers whenever the impression is given that it is restricted in its scope and is one among a number of possible human interests. One of the most powerful attractions about science to-day is its note of universal relevance. Everyone is concerned with what science teaches, and with the results of scientific discoveries. This should be fully recognized as a consequence of the continual investigations of men of science.

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Yet religion both covers a wider field and penetrates more deeply within it. It concerns itself with ultimate things, with origins and destinies, with the meaning and value of human life, with its dependence upon and communion with the eternal life and spirit. There is nothing trivial here, nothing that suggests an optional subject for man's attention and for the conformation of his life to its principles. But, for all that, it is probable that more people would see in Michael Angelo's word a pointer to a need and lack of religion rather than of science—a misjudgment of religion for which those who profess and practise it have their share of responsibility. They do not always appear either to appreciate its grandeur or to be enlarged by it themselves. Three things are necessary—first, that thought should be manifestly determined through and through by the conviction of the bearing of religion upon life. If a man's thinking is religious or Christian only in patches he will not easily induce his neighbours to take his religion seriously. It is when he draws all things within the circle of his Christian thinking, and proves them by that Christian judgment in which he seeks to follow the guidance of the Spirit interpreting to him the mind of Christ, that his witness to the truth of religion, to its breadth and depth, cannot simply be disregarded.

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Secondly, this extension and penetration of thought must find expression in a life that bears consistent witness to the faith that is professed. Such a life is in line with that supreme witness, condensed into one glorious moment, which the martyrs gave by their deaths. There is the same, if a less radiant, illumination of principle by practice, when in daily conduct the sure signs are given of faith that works by love.

Thirdly, the Christian should be continually enlarging his prayers. There is no sphere in which there are greater possibilities of moral and spiritual progress, none in which they are less well realized, even by those who constantly enter it. Not only does prayer open the way into the inner courts of religion, but it is through prayer that the most direct and powerful contact is made between religion and the most familiar aspects of life, bringing them into the presence of God for his blessings upon them, for his inspiration, counsel, and warning. Moreover, it is of the very essence of true prayer that it should accompany thought wherever thought may go. However far that may be, it should never leave prayer behind. The more difficult the problem, the greater its relevance, not to this or that individual, but to the well-being of human society, the more need is there of the individual's prayers.

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For in prayer he is enabled to share in God's purposes for human life, and, learning to discern them better, to make them his own

Already in the New Testament it is apparent that Christian prayer is neither short in its range nor narrow in its scope. Of that none will be doubtful who listens to-morrow with attentive ear to the great prayer from the third chapter of Ephesians read as the epistle. And in it the listener may behold the reflection of the greatness of that Christian religion for whose increase in the world and in himself he should never cease to pray.

“ INTO THE DEEP ”



THE WAY OF EFFECTIVE DISCIPLESHIP

OFTEN it seems possible to discern an intended symbolism, an acted parable, in many of our Lord's dealings with his disciples, the records of which were carefully preserved by the evangelists. The passage from St. Luke which forms to-morrow's liturgical Gospel may well be an instance. In the early days of his ministry our Lord comes upon a group of his disciples who are washing their nets by the Sea of Galilee. They are in a disconsolate mood, because, apparently without going far from land, they had fished throughout the night and taken nothing. In this method and its failure our Lord seems to see a picture of their discipleship, which is still half-hearted and therefore ineffective. "By such means," he seems to warn them, "you will not be successful fishers of men, or gain for yourselves the satisfaction and rewards of discipleship. Observe the parable of the sea. Now launch out into the deep and let down your

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nets for a draught!" They obeyed and took, it will be remembered, "a great multitude of fishes."

History attests that the greatest Christian leaders, the men who, both by teaching and example, have most influenced the world, were men who left the shallows of minor ecclesiastical interests and controversies and launched out "into the deep," not afraid to make their message centre upon what St. Paul terms "the deep things of God." They did not profess to explain every intellectual difficulty, but they did offer to lead on their converts to a stage where such difficulties, though real enough, would no longer seem menacing obstacles to belief, as rocks which endanger navigation near the shore become harmless when they lie fathoms deep under the ocean.

Again, many a thoughtful man to-day is not really satisfied by what he derives from his religion. The peace of mind and happiness which, as he gathers from the New Testament, it should bestow seem outside his experience. The explanation may often be that he has never ventured beyond the shallowed waters and launched out into the deep. In other words, he has a genuine interest in Christianity, and he is ready enough to engage in argument about doctrine or to point out some supposed weakness in the Church.

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Yet he has hardly realized that the religion which satisfies has to be far more than a subsidiary interest in his life. It must so permeate him and influence his everyday activities as to transform him, in the Pauline phrase, into a "new creature." It is more than a superficial knowledge of the New Testament that he needs; it is more than merely occasional and formal prayers that are essential to his soul's health. He must launch out into the deep, for it as true of religion as of many lesser human interests that he who gives but little of himself to it will receive little in return.

This is not to suggest that a profound sense of religion must isolate an ordinary man from his contemporaries, or in any degree detach him from the normal business and recreations of his life. Yet certainly it will bring new happiness and spiritual power with which to meet misfortunes. Again, it will add, in a most real sense, to the value and effectiveness of his citizenship, for every Christian believer must wish to make belief easier for others. And always men are aware of the difference between those who still linger in the shallows of the Christian faith and those in whose sails, as it were, is the wind of the Spirit as they fare forth into the ocean of God's love.

VI

THE GOOD LIFE



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PLEASING GOD



THE END OF THE MORAL LIFE

IN his first epistle to the Thessalonians, the earliest, probably, of his letters to Christian churches, St. Paul expresses quite simply in two words a philosophy of religion and morals to which many volumes might be devoted. In the English versions those words appear as "to please God."

The notion of behaving in such a way as to please God, was, indeed, no discovery of the apostle's. If it be viewed in its widest range, it is inherent in all kinds of religious practices, some of them strange and unedifying. In its negative aspect, that of not displeasing the gods, it is one of the essential elements in Greek tragedy. Aeschylus and Sophocles do not come short of Amos and Isaiah in their moral earnestness; it is the lack of one consistent idea of the divine Being (inevitable in polytheistic religion) which makes it so difficult to paint a picture of man in relation to God that is both ethically and religiously satisfying. In the Old Testament the start-

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ing point for the true relation is the righteous God whose will it is that man also should be righteous. The duty and happiness of Israel are alike found in its pleasing of God; and when, in the music of the Psalms, an individual note is continually heard, the fusion of morality and religion has gone as far as was possible before the final revelation of God in His Son. It was this that made plain not only God's righteousness, to which the Hebrew scriptures bore ample witness, but also His love, which may be discerned in those writings, but not as the light illuminating the whole scene.

Nothing could show more clearly the intensely personal way in which Christian thought conceives of the relations between God and man than this manner of speech. It ceases to have any meaning the moment that God is spoken of under the figures of infinite substance or eternal law, as though these did the fullest justice possible to the mystery and majesty of His nature. The kind of attack that is made upon what is called anthropomorphism, that is the representation of God as possessing attributes which men find in themselves, is curiously blind to the real point of issue. Briefly that may be said to be the presence or absence of any response by God to man's religious and moral life, to his prayers and to his conduct. If everything that

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can be called anthropomorphic in man's thought about God is to be abandoned, then all that has ever been said about the justice and mercy, the righteousness and love of God, must be regarded as so much vain talk. St. Peter's counsel, "casting all your care upon him for he careth for you," would have ceased to be valid.

But those who do not merely believe that the name of God should be retained, but believe in God after the manner of that steadfast faith which the Bible celebrates, are secured in mind and heart against all attempts to deny God the reality of personal life. They live in the assurance that their whole duty and task be summed up as the doing of the will of God, and that in so far as they do that will they please Him. They will not imagine that by their behaviour they place God in their debt; they will remember our Lord's words about "unprofitable" servants, that is servants who have no claim upon God as though they had done more than was due; they will confess that it is only by God's merciful guidance and by the power of His Holy Spirit that they can perform those things that are good. But they will not doubt that in so far as they are enabled to do His will they please God. The good life finds its end in the welcoming voice of the Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

A GODLY LIFE



THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

DURING the season lately ended Christians everywhere have been meditating on that life of self-sacrifice, that amazing revelation of perfect love which reached its culmination on the first Good Friday. But this sacrifice was not an end in itself; its purpose was to bring men into such a relationship with God that a "godly life" should become not only an accepted ideal but a fact of experience. To-morrow's collect speaks of our Lord as "both a sacrifice for sin, and also an example of godly life." The work of Christ is not completely understood unless it is seen as something utterly relevant to man's daily life. To stress too exclusively the transcendent Christ of theology, and to relegate to a place of secondary importance in the thought of the Christian the Jesus of the Gospels, is a tendency all too common. But each conception is important and neither without the other can provide an adequate foundation for the fully matured Christian life.

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To endeavour "to follow the blessed steps of his most holy life" cannot mean a slavish attempt to reproduce his life, as an art student copies the work of a great master, for this, in the constantly changing conditions of the world, would clearly be impossible; and, indeed, the attempt has often led to disappointment and disillusionment. The problem for the Christian is in every age that of relating the Christian way of life, as it was expounded and lived by Jesus, to the life of his own world, in which he must find his sphere of spiritual achievement.

To follow the example of Christ is to drink deeply of his spirit; to meditate upon the principles which he set before men; to strive to reinterpret his teaching in terms relevant to the existing situation, and so to serve God with the mind as well as with the heart and soul. For our Lord the way was the way of vicarious suffering, of charity, of service, and of dedication. To ask the question "What would Jesus do?" as it has sometimes been asked by popular religious teachers, is to take the path of irrelevance, which must in the end lead to mystification; it is to side-track the true problem. There is no easy answer to such a question—there is perhaps no answer at all; for the real question is "What does the spirit of Christ prompt me to do?"

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The true *Imitatio Christi* can never be a copying of Christ; it can be only a life through which his spirit is freely expressing itself in ways which will inevitably bear the marks of contemporary life.

The worship of Christ, who is for the Christian the ultimate revelation of God, must never be made a substitute for what is doubtless the harder task of following him; harder because it is the supreme test of the sincerity of worship. "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Such a challenge comes with renewed force to-day in a world which above all things needs for its salvation not so much dogma as character, the sacrificial spirit, that utter devotion to God and his purposes which is seen in its completeness in the life of our Lord, and of which he is man's perfect "ensample." To follow "the blessed steps of his most holy life" is to seek to translate what he taught men into that quality of character and conduct which is the most potent witness to the power and goodness of God. A sacrifice and an example; each the complement of the other; each equally dynamic and challenging; each demanding that dedication of life through which Christ may be made manifest anew to the world.

GOODNESS



THE SOIL AND ITS PRODUCE

CHRISTIAN experience, like all human experience, is never stationary. It cannot remain at a fixed point; in its very essence it is progressive. The curious and somewhat striking phrase in to-morrow's Collect, "nourish us with all goodness," tacitly recognizes this truth, for the use of the word nourish implies growth and development, and progressive experience towards ever more complete maturity. The Collect suggests that goodness itself provides what is needed for its own development. It is that which nourishes the soul, though at the same time it is the natural product of that nourishment. It is both root and fruit; both the soil and the produce of the soil.

The word goodness seems to elude definition. It is indeed one of those words which are themselves definitions and cannot be reduced to simpler terms. Yet goodness is easily recognized. St. Paul is perhaps attempting to analyse goodness

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when he brings together a beautiful cluster of virtues and calls them "the fruit of the Spirit." Goodness is the most comprehensive of all the virtues, for it includes both love and all the qualities and actions which spring from love. The influence of goodness, intangible as it may be, reveals itself in an infinite variety of ways; it is no negative quality; it is one of the most powerful forces in human life. The effect upon the community of a life of genuine goodness cannot be over-estimated. It is not only that for the individual goodness makes for wholeness and an integrated personality, and so for health of body and mind; it is also "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world"

Human goodness is the reflection, albeit a pale reflection, of the goodness of God. It comes from God; it is nourished by the divine goodness, and this is true even when its source is not recognized. The final proof of the reality of a man's religion must always be sought in the realm of character—not so much perhaps in what he has actually achieved as in the direction in which he is moving; though creeds and forms of worship will have their due place in any mature Christian life. It is said of St. Stephen that he was "a good man and full of the Holy Ghost," which is at once a tribute to his character and a recognition

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of its true source. There could be no more adequate testimony to the quality of a man's religion. St. Stephen's goodness was expressed, as it must always be expressed, in ordinary practical ways. His main task was that of caring for the widows and the poor; and although it soon became evident that he was endowed with exceptional gifts—"he did great wonders and miracles among the people"; he was orator, saint, and mystic—it was in the humbler and simpler qualities that the goodness which commended him to the Church was recognized.

He who prays this prayer, therefore, asks that he may grow in goodness; that increasingly his life may become a reflection of the goodness of God; that his every deed may spring from that inner fountain which is continuously renewed and nourished by the divine goodness. It is a fundamental petition, for the whole purpose of redemption is that man's life shall be good, transformed into the likeness of the divine, a channel through which God's Spirit of love and goodness may flow into the common life of man.

MONEY



CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

“**G**IVE all thou canst: High Heaven rejects the lore of nicely-calculated less or more.” Thus does Wordsworth vindicate the action of King Henry VI in building the “glorious work” of King’s College Chapel for the “scanty band of white-robed Scholars.” Perhaps there came into the poet’s mind the Gospel stories of two women who in their different ways anticipated the generosity of the King’s gift—the poor widow who threw into the Temple treasury the two mites which make a farthing, “all that she had, even all her living,” and the woman who broke the alabaster box of very precious ointment and poured it on the Lord’s head at the dinner in Simon’s house.

Generosity of this kind is not the same as the lavishness which springs merely from natural impulse. Attractive as this latter often is, it may mean little in the way of genuine sacrifice, while the result may as easily show it to have been unwise as wise. The noble prayer of

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Ignatius Loyola in which the Christian asks to be taught "to give and not to count the cost" expresses only one side of the truth. Not seldom is the finest kind of gift that which is offered when the cost has been truly counted and its burden rigorously weighed. It is that which is the special glory of those who have given themselves in life's most arduous and dangerous ways. With open eyes they have made choice of paths where whatever of that which men call success may come to them would need to be measured by the wine of life not drunk but poured out.

But many a Christian needs to pray that he may learn the place of giving in his life, not least in the use of his money. As a matter of religious principle he would not deny the truth of responsible stewardship, of his obligation before God in this matter. Yet there may be a wide gap between what he acknowledges in theory and what he does in fact. Nor does the stimulation which his kindly and Christian feelings receive from some appeal made with moving eloquence in church or over the wireless tend by itself to establish within him a tradition of right giving. It is not difficult on such occasions to be a cheerful giver, raising a shilling to half-a-crown or more. But thereby he may be deluded into the belief that he does more than may reason-

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ably be expected of him, whereas he may really be failing as seriously in this respect as in prayer or any other region of the spiritual life.

Just because money is so evidently of the earth, earthly, and nothing about it is clearer than its inclusion within the scriptural word "we have brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out," it must be one of the most present and persistent dangers to the soul's health unless it is examined and used and controlled in the light of its spiritual possibilities. There are two chapters, the eighth and ninth of St Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians, dealing with the collection being made among the Christians of Greece for the help of the Christians of Jerusalem, which show on how high a level the greatest of Christian missionaries handles the problem of a congregation's responsibility in a case of great financial need. But it is, or should be, impossible to think of congregation or Church and not to bring the account back to the individual Christian. However it may be with those who are without, the Christian ought not to ask "What is the Church doing?" without bringing it home to himself and asking "What am I doing?" And whereas there are duties and problems facing the Church, to some of which the individual Christian may be able

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to contribute nothing but his prayers, that can hardly ever be wholly the case in respect of money. To seek here for knowledge and wisdom and the power to do God's will is itself a sign of spiritual life; and of the reality of that life it is a sure test.

THE CLEANSING OF NAAMAN



A PARABLE FOR TO-DAY

WHATEVER men may have thought in the more optimistic years of the past century, events have now forced upon their attention with tragic insistence the fact that something is profoundly wrong with the human situation. The diagnosis of the disease will vary with varying presuppositions, but the fact itself admits of no argument; it is placarded before the eyes of all. There is no need to go to the extreme of wholesale condemnation of man and his efforts, but his failure—the fatal incapacity of man to work out his own salvation by his own unaided strength—is all too obvious.

The exquisite story of the cleansing of Naaman, which will be read in many churches to-morrow, may be taken as a parable for to-day. The Syrian war-lord needed and sought healing, but he had to learn that it could not come in the way that he felt would be commensurate with his prestige—“I thought, He will surely come out to me, and

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stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God." Insignificant as the Jordan must seem to the Damascene soldier by comparison with the rivers which made fruitful and beautiful his own city, it was only in this sacred stream that he could find healing. To bathe in it, as Elisha's messenger instructed him, demanded indeed an act of humility and obedience which he was reluctant to perform. But when he was at length persuaded so to humble himself and to dip himself "seven times in Jordan" a new life began.

It is easy, and indeed characteristic, for man to put his faith in this or that panacea, as Naaman imagined that the finer rivers Abana and Pharpar would be just as efficacious as the waters of the sacred Jordan. Many remedies for human ills have been and are being prescribed, often without due regard to the spirit which alone could make them effective. Education, for example, may help to refine and ennoble man's mind, and to enlarge his conception of the universe and the significance of life; but if the spirit by which it is informed is divorced from true religion, it can be put to wrong and even sinister uses, as the last decade has so plainly shown. Social security, if it is fully achieved, will be an untold blessing to the world; international goodwill and its outcome in inter-

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national agreements would make for ordered progress and peace.

None of these remedies, however, goes to the heart of the matter. Attempts to achieve these desirable ends, if they go no farther, are but to treat the symptom and to neglect to look for the root of the trouble—like prescribing quinine for malaria and neglecting to deal with the mosquito that carries the disease. At bottom it is the spirit of man which must be cleansed and regenerated, and this can be accomplished only by its subjection to the spirit of God. It is only as man learns to cooperate with God by humble obedience to his laws that healing can come, that what is wrong with the human situation can be put right.

There is no short cut to the Kingdom of God. The social order does not exist apart from individual men and women, and therefore it cannot be regenerated by schemes, no matter how idealistic and radical, which neglect to deal with the fundamental human problem, which is essentially personal and spiritual. It is for the individual Christian first of all himself to bathe in the sacred stream of God's forgiving and healing love, and then by his own renewed life to impart to the world the spirit which it needs for its salvation.

MANKIND'S QUEST



THE PRIZE OF INNER PEACE

INNER peace, when the scene without is full of turmoil and confusion, when all seems restless and unstable, is a prize for which no effort would be too arduous, no cost too great. As to that there would be great agreement among men of different times and cultures and religions. No one of whom it could be said that in him a spirit of wisdom enlightened and controlled his thoughts has believed that this peace was to be found in the abundance of things which a man might possess. The great teachers to whom men of later generations have looked back and looked up have been at one in their repudiation of that kind of materialism. And the form, the tradition, of that teaching has possessed and never lost its assured credentials in the verdict of experience. External "goods" (there is irony in a word that can so greatly misrepresent the truth of some tragic situation) cannot make up for the peace that has left the soul and has left it desolate.

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Because this need of inner peace is common to humanity, one of the great tasks of religion has been to meet it, but since there is no common view of man's nature and destiny, there is no common understanding of the loss of peace within, of its cause and of its cure. More and more it is being realized to-day that the answers to the problems, the remedies for the evils, which beset human life in its individual and social aspects, depend upon the answer to the fundamental question, "What is man?" There is not a little value in knowing what the real question is, even when there is no claim to know the answer: yet, without doubt, the failure to give an answer must be a source of great weakness.

The answer which the Christian Church gives is an integral part of the Gospel committed to its charge, and receives continual illustration, with increasing clarity and enlargement, in the Bible. For the Bible is as seriously intent upon the truth about man as it is upon the truth about God. And though, in a book about Biblical theology, or about the theology of some portion of the Bible, it is possible to have a section on the teaching about God and another on the teaching about men, this convention or convenience ought never to obscure the fact that the teaching about God and man is a unity. God's purpose for and in his world is not to be understood apart from what

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he wills for man, and man's nature and destiny are not to be understood apart from what he is, as God has made him, and from what God would have him become. The great Biblical ideas of the Kingdom of God, of sonship to God, of eternal life, have their origin in the Biblical answer to the question "What is man?" as that answer is contained in the revelation of God which is the theme of the Bible.

For those who make that answer their own peace is already at the door of their mind. It is no small thing to join in the prayer which begins "O thou that art the light of the minds that know thee." But more is needed than this illumination of the intellect, as none knows better than those who are thus enlightened. The Gospel speaks to man's need, and it is not in his intellectual weaknesses and failures that his need is greatest. The old appeal "Get right with God" is no slogan of a party; it is the voice of the Church, making known the call of the Gospel to those who are without and to those who are within. For there is no Christian who can detach himself, as though he did not need to include himself in the scope of to-morrow's Collect, "Grant, we beseech Thee, merciful Lord, to thy faithful people pardon and peace; that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve thee with a quiet mind, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SACRED AND SECULAR



THE CHRISTIAN CLAIM

IN a notable degree the old-fashioned division of human life into sacred and secular activities has vanished. A century ago the boundary-line between them was precisely drawn, with "sacred" art, music, architecture, studies, and occupations on one side of the line, and their "secular" equivalents on the other. Failure to keep them apart, to allow, for example, any secular employment or literature to invade the sacred territory of Sunday, was regarded as a grievous sin. To-day popular opinion has swung to the other extreme, and for many people the secularization of Sunday has become complete. But the real problem to be faced is far larger than a decision as to what may or may not be fittingly done on the first day of the week. Throughout the Christian era the two words, sacred and secular, have been in common use, marking out separate and often rival claims.

But the time seems to have come for challeng-

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ing the ideas these words embody, of asking whether they are derived from an artificial and mistaken interpretation of the Divine plan, or are really in accord with our Lord's teaching. Their origin, no doubt, lay in the sharp conflict between the earliest Christian Church and Hellenic paganism. On the one side, as it seemed, was the sacred force of religion; on the other, the secular side, were ranged art, literature, science, and temporal forms of government. The Christian, it was held, could hardly concern himself with these and escape injury to his spiritual life. This idea was modified as the range of the Church increased; indeed, for a time music, literature, architecture, and the drama were transferred to the religious province, and scarcely existed outside it. Yet the concept persisted of life as divided into religious and secular compartments, and even now it is far from extinct.

It seems, however, to gain no support from the teaching of our Lord as contained in the Gospels and interpreted in the Epistles. So far from suggesting that the Christian must detach himself from the interests usually classed as secular, he praises those who show energy and perseverance in their everyday business. Except for the group set apart in order that they may transmit his message, he never suggests that the

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change of heart he brings about must necessitate a change of occupation. Zacchaeus need not cease to be a publican; the centurion need not quit the army. When, again, St Paul converts and baptizes his gaoler at Philippi, he gives no hint that the gaoler must now find some worthier employment. For the truth seems to be that Christianity claims the whole of life, refusing to recognize its partition into sacred and secular departments. There is no so-called secular occupation into which the benign and sacred influence of religion cannot penetrate. Its effect is less that men do new things than they do the old things in a new way. The centurion was a different soldier after meeting Christ, the converted gaoler was far more humane, finding opportunities for Christian kindness in his work.

Therefore sacred and secular are terms that can be disused with little loss. It is an error to segregate any part of life from religion; the day's work no less than its worship can be dedicated to God, and receive his benediction. Every wholesome pleasure and the power of enjoying it are sacred, being gifts of God. "All things are yours," as St. Paul wrote; "all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's."

SUBSTITUTES FOR WAR



THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH

IN a famous passage, widely quoted during the last war, William James, the American philosopher, supported his defence of "Asceticism as a type of Saintliness" with these arresting words:—"One hears of the mechanical equivalent of heat. What we now need to discover is the moral equivalent of war; something heroic that will speak to men as universally as war does, and yet will be as compatible with their spiritual selves as war has proved itself to be incompatible."

Following this out, he proposed two substitutes for war as a discipline producing results of high moral quality: a widespread acceptance of voluntary poverty, and "a conscription of the whole youthful population to form for a certain number of years a part of the army enlisted against nature." In these directions, he urged, might be sought a substitute for the stern stimulus of war to valour and hardness, in a world which, to those who proclaim war's inescapable necessity, appears

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likely to become "a sheep's paradise" and "a cattleyard of a planet" without it.

To a Christian this is a direct challenge. That war, in spite of its stark horror and its increasing power through applied science to inflict destruction, does call forth heroic self-devotion, fortitude, and courage, and a singleness of purpose which unites a nation like nothing else, those who have lived through the ordeal of the past six years will gratefully testify. Sacred memories of the sacrifices of the fallen are their legacy to the generation which is entrusted with the task of saving civilization from ultimate disaster. Christians have prayed without ceasing that, mindful of their sufferings, the peoples of the world may forsake aggression and violence and live together in righteousness and peace. But that must needs involve so vital a change from the usual sequel of great wars that only a facile optimism can deny that nothing less than a spiritual revolution is necessary to lead mankind permanently to renounce war and establish peace on sure foundations.

Let it be supposed that the philosopher is right in thinking that the acceptance of voluntary poverty, or a wholesale conscription of youth to take its part in the conflict with nature, is likely to evoke the warrior virtues, and so to become the

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desired moral equivalent of war. Where is the realist who can lightly assume that men and nations will reach the Utopian condition of mind which would welcome and submit to such rigorous plans to safeguard peace without the operation of some mighty spiritual influence? Utopias are so easy to imagine, so difficult to create. Before they come to earth they must first be spiritually achieved in men's inmost souls.

Christianity alone can kindle within men that creative power. The martial virtues most in evidence in war spring from a common root in the will to sacrifice self on behalf of others in the service of some commanding cause. The call of the cause and a leader's magnetism, or the urgent needs of a man's fellows in some critical situation, inspire a splendid heroism which makes light of danger and an endurance which faces incredible hardships. What man needs in peace is something more than the moral and spiritual equivalent of that, something that goes farther and strikes deeper, something that will dislodge him root and branch from his natural self-centredness. Self-rejecting faith in Christ, self-forgetting hope for the coming of God's kingdom, self-devoting love of God revealed at Bethlehem and Calvary, and of men as brothers for whom Christ died—these produce in life and char-

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acter changes which are seen at their highest in the great saints, but are also manifest in the lives of undistinguished men and women whom Christ is daily saving from the inward servitude of sin. There is nothing spectacular in faith's good fight against evil; it is a continual battle on many fronts. But it is war inspired by love, not lust of gain, and its legacy to humanity is not shattered homes and broken hearts, but the binding together of men in one family in the Kingdom of God. That is the one and only spiritually effective substitute for war.

RELIGION AND POLITICS



THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH

LORD Beaconsfield once asserted that the two subjects of universal interest to the British people were politics and religion, a statement which even if accurate in those times is no longer true in these. None the less, there are periods, into one of which the nation has now entered, when political issues and controversies necessarily have a large place in the public mind, and the problem of deciding the right relationship between politics and religion presents itself again to large numbers of thoughtful people. It is far from being a new problem, having been already urgent in the earliest days of Christianity, but the solutions offered then and in each later age have been remarkably varied. At one extreme is the belief that Christians should aim at the greatest practicable detachment from secular affairs, and that religion as such is wholly unconcerned with the form of national government. At the other extreme is the view, held with

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calamitous results at different times and in various countries, that the Church should make itself a political force, allying itself with some one party, and ready to join in whatever intrigues might serve that party's interests.

It need hardly be said that neither of these views is supported by the teaching of the New Testament. Certainly our Lord held himself remarkably aloof from the political issues of his time, although to have come forward as a partisan and a leader would have gained him a large and enthusiastic following. But to take that course seemed to him a temptation to be met and conquered. He preferred to reform institutions by transforming the men who composed them. These would become the leaven, gradually changing the world; they would take a full part in its affairs and render to Caesar all that was Caesar's due. Thus no one need doubt that political activity is consistent with, and even in a sense is demanded by, the Christian religion. The disciple will help to purify political warfare by his own loyalty to Christian principles, and will be watchful against the dangers of party spirit; refusing, for example, to do in the interests of party advantage what he would scorn to do for the sake of his own gain.

Many of the disputes over the right relation-

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ship of religion with politics are due to confused thinking, a failure to distinguish the duty of the individual Christian from the duty of a Christian Church. The individual, provided always that he keeps "clean hands and a pure heart," is clearly entitled to do all he can for the success of whatever cause he believes to be right. Yet he will not forget that those holding opposite views do so with an equally good conscience. He must never imply that his own political views are the only ones which a true Christian can hold, or try to identify the Church with his own political party. The Church and its ministers cannot become political partisans without grave injury to the spiritual work which is their primary business. What the Church can do is to reassert the fundamental principles which its Founder laid down, to foster in every domestic contest the spirit of charity and good will, and to pray, not for this or the other sectional victory but desiring the people of this land to be so guided that, in the wise words of a collect, "they may both perceive and know what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same."

VII

THE SOURCE OF VISION



ATTENTION TO GOD
A Still Small Voice.

CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
The Teaching of A Gospel and Epistle.

FAITH
Achieving the Impossible.

THE CITY OF GOD
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ATTENTION TO GOD



A STILL SMALL VOICE

THE story of Elijah's solitary encounter with God, which is one of the Bible's great prose-poems, speaks with peculiar force to those who have passed through the tempest of war. "After the fire a still small voice"; or, as in the margin of the Revised Version, "a sound of gentle stillness." In contrast with the approach of God to man in hours of world upheaval is his appeal when the storm is ended. In the first he speaks with the stern voice of judgment; in the second only a responsive attitude of attention is aware that he is speaking at all.

"O Lord, when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." There are those whom the catastrophic experiences of war have led to the tragic conclusion that the world's sufferings are a negation of God, and ultimately of all the great religious values. How, they have asked, can any considering person, in face of the morally chaotic process in which

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multitudes of the innocent are indiscriminately consumed with the guilty, maintain belief in divine justice and a providential ordering of the world? Others, on the contrary, have perceived with the wide open eyes of faith a fundamentally different meaning in the facts. War, they see, is the inevitable sequel of man's rejection of the rule of God, and of his refusal to order life under God's guidance, and its pains and horrors are the fruits of evil roots in men's souls. To these it is evidence not of chaos, but of order, of cosmic law, not of mindless fate. Sin inflicts its own inescapable consequences, and the whole human family suffers from them. In the rending earth they read the handwriting of a divine judgment.

A CALL TO REMEMBRANCE

And so in the convulsions of warring nations there speaks to them the voice of God. Faced with a choice between God and chaos, faith refuses to be overcome by appearances, and discerns his message through the earthquake and the fire. Times of strain and trial are to many what the dramatic struggle of Carmel was to Elijah, a spur to heroic effort which releases new energies and awakens fresh vision. The strange sequel of this often is that when liberation from crisis has come there follows what almost seems to be

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an inevitable reaction of gloom and weakness, and a loss of insight and spiritual awareness. Then, as for many in the present situation, there is need of listening attention; like Elijah, they hear a voice bidding them to "go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord," and obeying it they find, as he found, that God speaks as clearly to those who listen in the stillness as ever he spoke in the tumult of war.

To such attention the still small voice is in the first place a summons to remembrance. "Thou calledst upon me in troubles, and I delivered thee: and heard thee what time as the storm fell upon thee." "Take heed lest thou forget." Emergency religion passes away with passing danger, and what once seemed to be serious spiritual conviction tends to reveal in reaction as the flickering of a fugitive piety which gradually smoulders and disappears. At all costs the vision of the living God must be recovered: the dying flame of insight and conviction must be rekindled: the faith which puts to proof the things unseen must be renewed at its source.

God speaks thus through memory and its revival of faded spiritual impressions; but memory is fruitful and dynamic only when its recollections create decisions. The summons to re-

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membrance of the past is also a call to dedication in the present. "The Lord said unto him (Elijah), 'Go, return on thy way.'" Peace has its tasks and difficulties as real and overwhelming as any in war, and they demand a self-devotion not less single-hearted and courageous. To listen with patient attention to God speaking, to seek his help and guidance when the menace of mortal danger has been removed, and to offer to him the response of unreserved obedience, is to Christian men and women at this time the unmistakable message of the still and small voice.

CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE



THE TEACHING OF A GOSPEL AND EPISTLE

IN the course of the projected revision of the Book of Common Prayer, a special collect, epistle, and gospel were selected for use on St. Mary Magdalene's day, July 22. Amid the differences of opinion which beset the revision it is unlikely that any controversy as to the expediency of this action had a place. She was saved by Christ from a great evil, "seven devils," which had taken possession of her. She was a witness of his passion, though medieval painters went beyond the Gospel record in representing her as at the foot of the Cross; she saw where he was buried, and on Easter morning she was one of those who came with the spices and ointments to perform the last sad, loving offices at the sepulchre, where they believed they would find him lying. And to her the Master, no longer buried but risen, revealed himself and charged her with a message to his disciples. All the records speak of her; St. John's narrative, chosen for

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to-morrow's Gospel, tells of her meeting with the risen Christ in words of a simple beauty which make it a most moving passage.

Yet in it occur words not immediately easy to understand, the words "touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father." The authorized version hardly does justice to the force of the Greek verb, which is shown more clearly in Westcott's rendering, "do not cling to me." Even so, the difficulty remains; for why, it may be asked, should there be this check upon the devotion of Mary, so naturally anxious to assure herself, by the touch that goes farther than sight or sound, that he was indeed there and alive?

All this will have been in the minds of those who selected for to-morrow's epistle the verses from the second letter to the Corinthians in which St. Paul wrote that much discussed sentence, "Though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." They throw light upon St. John's narrative, and no less do they receive light from it. In each case there is a warning against any attempt to return to a condition of things, to a relationship belonging to this earthly life and to that alone, which had passed away. Knowledge of Christ, fellowship with Christ, such as had been true and fruitful while he taught and worked in

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Galilee and Jerusalem, could not remain as it was now that he had endured the Cross and passed to the glory of his resurrection. A new day had dawned, and in its newness old things must become new.

Whatever sense of loss this warning against the effort to continue thinking and living in terms of a past may have brought or may bring, it points the way to the truth of the Christian life as one of fellowship with God and with his son Jesus Christ our Lord. It is right to value highly all that may be learnt of the "Jesus of History," to use the well-known phrase. But that learning cannot, by itself, be the source and substance of a living faith, and a religion that manifests faith by works. The strength of Christianity consists in this, that while it never loses touch with the history of Jesus, with his life on earth, it declares the reality and the joy of a deeper knowledge which is directed towards Christ as he is now. That is the ideal which St. Paul set before himself when he wrote to the Philippians of knowing Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings. And of this kind is all true Christian knowledge. It may grow slowly and not find all things clear. But always it is the knowledge of one who was dead and is alive again for evermore.

FAITH



ACHIEVING THE IMPOSSIBLE

THE Bible contains many illustrations of the invincible quality of faith. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the power of faith is set forth with profound spiritual insight. One of tomorrow's liturgical lessons includes the story of the healing of the man with a withered hand. When our Lord commanded him to stretch it forth he was asking the impossible—as he so frequently did—but faith rose to meet the challenge, and empowered by that faith “he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.” The whole history of man is indeed full of such illustrations, though it is unnecessary to go farther back than the experience of the recent years of war. It was faith, and faith alone, which sustained the nation, all unprepared as it was, to meet the ordeal at the outset of the conflict.

To achieve a stable human society, which all men of good will desire, out of the welter which

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war and its aftermath have created, would appear to be a task utterly beyond the resources of man. Human nature, it is said, cannot be changed, and all that at best can be hoped for is that evil will be held in check by the restraint of organized force. A background of force may be and will be necessary during the period of transition between war and peace, and doubtless even after war has ceased. But to accept this as the only permanent basis of stability is to come short of that faith upon which alone a peaceable future can be built. If man must depend solely upon himself the outlook is indeed dark, but if by faith he can link himself and his efforts with the omnipotence of God nothing will be impossible.

As the Christian Church surveys its task in the world to-day it would be easy to give way to pessimism. Many have done so, and have focused their attention and their efforts upon the Church itself, almost as though it had no direct concern with what is happening in the spheres of political life, social conditions, and international relationships. So to conceive of the Church is bound to lead to the concentration of all available energy on the perfecting of the "ark of salvation," while the flood rises and threatens to overwhelm the vast majority of mankind. If the Church exists not for itself but for the world;

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if its message is both intended for all men and is also relevant to the whole of human activity, the Christian may and must believe that through its consecrated efforts the impossible can be achieved. Faith grasps the cardinal fact that when God commands he also empowers.

In the life of the individual, too, faith is an essential quality. All men who reflect are conscious of much personal failure to achieve the good they desire and to overcome weaknesses which hinder their spiritual progress. The root of the trouble may not be so much lack of will as the lack of that confidence which enables a man to say "I can." To accept oneself as one is and cease to believe in the possibility of improvement is to fail to grasp the creative possibilities of a faith which can renew; and so equip for victorious living. The confident affirmation of St. Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me," was not the expression of an ideal for ever beyond his reach; it was a present possibility because he relied not solely upon his own capacity but upon the ever-available power of the risen Lord.

THE CITY OF GOD



A PROMISE COME TRUE

“**T**HERE shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new.”

So runs the prophecy of the life that is to be within the holy city that comes down from God out of heaven. The symbolism of the last book of the Bible reaches its final expression of beauty in the description of that city. The foundations adorned with precious stones, the gates of pearl, and the street of gold are so many signs of a perfection with which the vision of those who enter will be enraptured. Such is the tabernacle of God that will be with men: “How lovely is thy dwelling-place, thou Lord of hosts.”

Symbolism of this kind is to be accepted, not explained. Its terms cannot be translated into precise equivalents. There is no other

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language which will give it a meaning easier to grasp and bring its truth more immediately home to the inquiring mind. For the picture in whose composition the symbolism is employed is of something which has not yet been but is to be. What that "really" will be cannot be known beforehand : only through its presence can it be known. That is forgotten whenever there is an attempt to press religious symbolism beyond the limits of the service it can render and to treat it as an instrument of actual, present knowledge.

Yet there would be great loss if future and present, the new heaven and earth and the first ones, could be brought no closer together than the language of symbolism allows. That closer relation is revealed in the verse which talks of the absence from the City of Gold of those things which belong to the tragic side of human experience in the present. For sorrow and pain point to those facts of life which show most plainly its imperfection. Where they are, life is a record of good and evil intermingled. And though, here and now, there is no experience of what life would be if it were free from evil and from the experiences which evil draws after it, there is enough present knowledge of the good for the promise of the new era and the heavenly city

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to be much more than an example of prophetic symbolism. Freedom from the pain that marks the heavy weight of frustration, disappointment, and loss is not just a promise, still less a mere dream, of the future. It is a real experience, though not a stable one. Its stability will appear only with the coming of the kingdom and city of God.

Already, in that great day of human history which God made to dawn in the coming of his Son into the world, future and present, the new and the old, were brought together in those mighty works that revealed the powers of the age to come conquering evil and setting men free. The Gospel to be read to-morrow contains the account, found in St Mark alone, of the healing by our Lord of the deaf stammerer. It is like a signpost pointing back to the great prophecy of the day of the coming of God when "the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped . . . and the tongue of the dumb sing." Jesus was no warrior-Messiah as some expected, nor was his kingdom to be set up in the city of old Jerusalem. Yet where he was, the blessings of the future age were manifested, and the Kingdom of God had come upon men. Those whom he freed then from whatever evil oppressed them were

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the first signs of that final triumph of good, when to enter into the gates of the new city and true kingdom will be to enter into the joy of the Lord.